

Two Lives of the Virgin

John Geometres, Euthymios the Athonite, and Maximos the Confessor

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Χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ Βασίλεια, καὶ ἡμετέροις ἐπὶ μύθοις
εἴ γέ τις ἐστὶ χάρις, σοὶ χάρις εὐεπίης.

*Rejoice, o Queen, and if there is any grace in
our public speeches, the grace of our eloquence
is yours.*

John Geometres¹

The publication in 1986 of a Georgian *Life of the Virgin* attributed to the seventh-century Byzantine theologian Maximos the Confessor has provoked a wide range of reactions concerning its authorship,

ranging from enthusiastic acceptance of the attribution to silence and outright rejection.² The *Life* is remarkable for offering a comprehensive account of the Virgin's life, with special emphasis on her direction of Christ's female disciples, her active participation in the passion and resurrection, and her leadership of the nascent church. Hans Urs von Balthasar expressed his delight that this Georgian text "clearly gives us a Maximus who is entirely new but recognizable . . . and is much more accessible than in most of his theological works."³ His emphasis on an "entirely new" Maximos inadvertently highlights why it has been so difficult for scholars to accept the work as genuine.⁴ Since the

1 Verses 71–72 of Geometres' fourth hymn to the Virgin Mary (PG 106:865). For a critical edition of the hymn, see J. Sajdak, *Ioannis Kyriotis Geometrae Hymni in SS. Deiparam* (Poznan, 1931), 75. Χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ Βασίλεια is borrowed from *Odyssey* 13.59. For ἡμετέροις ἐπὶ μύθοις and its meaning suggested above, see C. Simelidis, *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Göttingen, 2009), 181 (on *Carm.* II.1.19.17), and R. Ricceri, "Gregorio Nazianzeno, *Carm.* II.1.50: Introduzione, Testo Critico, Traduzione e Commento" (PhD diss., Universities of Ghent and Rome "Tor Vergata," 2013), 121–23 (on *Carm.* II.1.50.31–32, where Gregory refers to the delivery of his famous theological orations in Constantinople). However, it is also possible that the expression in Geometres' hymn means simply "in my words," especially if we do not follow Alexander Kazhdan in taking ἡμετέροις as a reference to the choir of the church of the Theotokos in the district of Constantinople known as "ta Kyrou"; see A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, ed. C. Angelidi (Athens, 2006), 262.

2 See S. J. Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church according to the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*," *HTR* 98 (2005): 441–67, at 441–44, and *The Life of the Virgin: Maximus the Confessor*, trans. S. J. Shoemaker (New Haven, 2012), 6–8. Shoemaker has repeatedly complained about "the silence of many experts on Maximus regarding this text" (*The Life of the Virgin*, 6).

3 Letter to Michel van Esbroeck, 30 January 1987, cited in M. van Esbroeck, "Some Earlier Features in the *Life of the Virgin*," *Marianum* 63 (2001): 297–308, at 297–98, n. 2.

4 For various objections to the work's authenticity or early date, see P. Booth, "On the *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor," *JTS* 66 (2015): 149–203, and M. B. Cunningham, "The Life of the Virgin Mary according to Middle Byzantine Preachers and Hagiographers: Changing Contexts and Perspectives," *Apocrypha* 27 (2016): 137–59, at 148–50; cf. S. J. Shoemaker, "The Georgian *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor: Its Authenticity(?) and Importance," *Scrinium* 2 (2006): 307–28. Despite his anxious defense of Maximos's authorship or at least a

publication of the Georgian *Life*, the debate regarding its authorship has intensified.⁵ This debate involves another *Life of the Virgin*, which was written by John Geometres in the late tenth century and closely resembles the Georgian *Life*. It is my view that this debate is based on a misleading assumption, put forward by Michel van Esbroeck, concerning the close relationship between John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* and the Georgian translation of a supposedly now lost Greek text by Maximos the Confessor. For van Esbroeck, the relationship was simply to be explained as follows: "John Geometres redrafted the text which Euthymios translated into Georgian."⁶ To be sure, van Esbroeck allowed that the Georgian translator, Euthymios the

seventh-century dating, Shoemaker has admitted that "the text creates an image that was certainly at odds with the cultural environment in which it was produced" ("The Virgin Mary," 457). It is significant that no such work by Maximos the Confessor was found by the early tenth-century compilers of the entire corpus of Maximos's writings; see B. Markesinis, "La date de la composition du *Corpus* de S. Maxime le Confesseur: Nouvelles données," in *The Literary Legacy of Byzantium: Editions, Translations, and Studies in Honour of Joseph A. Munitiz SJ*, ed. B. Roosen and P. Van Deun (Turnhout, 2019), 255–87.

5 The existence of the *Life of the Virgin* was known from earlier Georgian scholarship—notably that of Korneli Kekelidze, who, according to Shoemaker (in *The Life of the Virgin*, 165–66, n. 4), in his initial remarks on the text ("Information from Georgian Sources Concerning the Venerable Maximos the Confessor," *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* [1912], vol. 3, part 9:1–41; part 11:451–86 [in Russian]), "seems to allow for the possibility that the life is authentic"; but in the first edition of his history of Old Georgian literature (*K'art'uli literaturis istoria*, 2 vols. [Tbilisi, 1923], 1:192–94), Kekelidze rejects the attribution. For the recent escalation of the debate, see Booth, "On the *Life*," and S. J. Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximos *Life of the Virgin* and the Byzantine Marian Tradition," *JTS* 67 (2016): 115–42.

6 M.-J. van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1986), 2:xx. Although Geometres' *Life* was unpublished, except for its last part (on the Dormition), van Esbroeck was able to read the entire text from manuscripts. The Dormition section was published by A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI^e au X^e siècle: Études et documents* (Paris, 1955), 364–415, with a French translation. A Modern Greek translation of part of the Dormition section was published in 1999 by the Chrysopodaritissis Monastery in Patras. Geometres' full *Life* has now been published by A. Benia, "Ιωάννη Γεωμέτρη, Εξόδιος ή προπεμπτήριος εις την Κοίμησιν της υπερειδόξου Δεσποίνης ημών Θεοτόκου: Πρώτη έκδοση και μελέτη του κειμένου" (PhD diss., University of Athens, 2019); an abstract is currently available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/46340> (accessed 15 December 2019), and I was allowed to briefly see a hard copy held at the library of the National Documentation Centre in Athens.

Athonite, could have "rearranged in his way a model"—and more specifically that he "could have used and rearranged Geometres"⁷—but only to dismiss this possibility quickly, making no attempt to understand the relationship of the two texts based on this hypothesis. Moreover, the implied assumption that John Geometres would simply have slavishly copied a single source to produce a long and highly rhetorical text is highly unlikely.⁸ There were no copyright laws in the Byzantine world, nor any concept of the exclusive ownership of written compositions. Unacknowledged citations and borrowings are a major feature of Byzantine style; not only was copying patristic authorities not condemned, but to the contrary it was highly praised.⁹ Still, this did not mean that a writer could take a major earlier work (let alone one written by a patristic authority or by an author closer to his own time) and pass it off as his own.¹⁰ Above all, blatant plagiarism on such

7 Van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:xx, xxvi. Cf. M. van Esbroeck, "Euthyme l'Hagiorite: Le traducteur et ses traductions," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* 4 (1988): 73–107, at 104. See also S. Mimouni, "Les Vies de la Vierge: État de la question," *Apocrypha* 5 (1994): 211–48, at 218, 220–21, n. 36; L. Gambero, "Biographies of Mary in Byzantine Literature," *Marian Studies* 60 (2009): 31–50, at 38; and Booth, "On the *Life*," 186–87 (with n. 143).

8 According to a statement found in Wenger's archive, during their meeting on 20 February 1988, "van Esbroeck claimed that the *Life* by Geometres was little more than a variant" of the Georgian *Life*; see M. Constatas, "The Story of an Edition: Antoine Wenger and John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin Mary*," in *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, ed. T. Arentzen and M. B. Cunningham (Cambridge, 2019), 324–40, at 330. Cf. Shoemaker, "The Georgian *Life*," 313–14: "John's tenth-century narrative is essentially a reworking of the *Life* ascribed to Maximos"; and Booth, "On the *Life*," 186: "It is evident that John and the Georgian translation preserve the same narrative sequencing, and in places their texts on the dormition are almost identical."

9 Commenting on the fact that the Christmas Kanon attributed to Kosmas the Hymnographer begins with the first lines of Gregory of Nazianzos's *Oration* 38, Theodore Prodromos, a twelfth-century poet, says that Gregory "did not only adorn the holy and dominical festivals with his own words and hymns, but also allowed others to plunder his words and ideas, a pillage worthy of blessing and admiration; the thief should not at all feel ashamed, but the complete opposite, he should take pride in his action." See *Theodori Prodromi commentarios in carmina sacra melodorum Cosmae Hierosolymitani et Ioannis Damasceni*, ed. H. M. Stevenson (Rome, 1888), 33.23–32.

10 In rare extreme cases from twelfth-century epistolography, a complete earlier letter is appropriated (see J. Darrouzès, "Un recueil épistolaire du XII^e siècle: Académie Roumaine Cod. Gr. 508," *REB* 30 [1972]: 199–229, at 202) or an incompetent and otherwise unknown monk produces his letters by copying every sentence from

a scale is not something that John Geometres, “one of the most intelligent and original writers of the tenth century,”¹¹ is likely to have ever done.

One could argue that in the age of Symeon Metaphrastes, who was a prolific rewriter of ancient texts, John Geometres may have had license to rework an earlier text, purify its language, and embellish it rhetorically.¹² This is true, and we might also call to mind Symeon’s close friend Nikephoros Ouranos,¹³ who praised Symeon’s work and whose own paraphrase of the *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* is a paraphrase of an anonymous sixth-century *Life* (still extant). We can see Nikephoros using much more elaborate language than the Greek of the original version, omitting stories that his audience around 1000 CE would have found naïve or awkward, and adding specific details about Amantios, his predecessor as governor of Antioch, that are absent from the original. In a manuscript of the eleventh century, the work is presented as “written by Nikephoros *magistros* of Antioch Ouranos.”¹⁴ But it is noteworthy that Ouranos’s major work, *Taktika*, is also largely a paraphrase of earlier sources, with the addition of limited firsthand material based on his campaign experience.¹⁵ Although Ouranos’s career shares

similarities with Geometres’, Ouranos was a compiler and reviser who lacked Geometres’ literary talents.¹⁶

Furthermore, in the case of John Geometres and his *Life of the Virgin*, there is no reason to assume that he reworked a now lost Greek prototype that is otherwise completely unattested.¹⁷ Geometres’ *Life* displays the character and skill shown in the rest of his literary works. Moreover, there is no reason to take the Georgian translation as proof of the existence of an earlier lost Greek *Life*: linguistic comparison of sections from Geometres’ text with the Georgian *Life* shows, as this article argues, that the Greek text behind the Georgian translation is Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin*. If both texts depended on an earlier Greek text written in a less heightened prose style (and such a text could not have been written by Maximos the Confessor), then the Georgian translation would not correspond so fully to Geometres’ Greek. The only explanation for the extensive verbatim or near-verbatim correspondence between the two texts is that the Georgian text translates John Geometres. One may accept this argument and simultaneously contend that Geometres himself reworked a lost model. However, there is no evidence to support that contention. To the contrary, John Geometres’ historical and literary profile leaves no doubt that the Greek text transmitted under his name is his own composition. Indeed, in the highly rhetorical preface to his *Life of the Virgin*, Geometres presents his work as an original composition, stating that his text systematized an extensive earlier literature on the subject (perhaps in the spirit of the tenth-century “encyclopaedic”

earlier writers: see *Iacobi Monachi Epistulae*, ed. E. and M. Jeffreys (Turnhout, 2009), xli–xlii.

11 A. R. Littlewood, ed., *The Progymnasmata of Ioannes Geometres* (Amsterdam, 1972), vii.

12 On Symeon Metaphrastes’ reworking of earlier acts of martyrs and lives of saints for his voluminous *Menologion*, see C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen, 2002).

13 On Nikephoros Ouranos’s career and writings, see E. McGeer, “Tradition and Reality in the *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos,” *DOP* 45 (1991): 129–40.

14 See P. Van Den Ven, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1962), 1:34*.

15 See McGeer, “Tradition and Reality in the *Taktika*,” 133–34. Earlier, A. Dain (*La Tactique de Nicéphore Ouranos* [Paris, 1937]) had argued that the *Taktika* lacks any original military historical worth, and Van Den Ven (*La vie*, 1:36*) thought that Nikephoros’s work on the *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* follows a similar sterile Byzantine paraphrastic style. McGeer found Dain’s judgment on the *Taktika* “not wholly unjustified,” but “too sweeping” (“Tradition and Reality in the *Taktika*,” 130). For the paraphrastic work of Ouranos, see also D. Krausmüller, “Fainting Fits and Their Causes: A Topos in Two Middle Byzantine Metaphraseis by Nicetas the Paphlagonian and Nicephorus Ouranos,” *Gouden Hoorn* 9 (2001/2002): 4–12.

16 Both are rare examples of men of letters who were also army officers, but “Ouranos does not possess the mastery of his colleague Geometres”: P. Agapitos and M. Hinterberger, introduction to Geometres’ description (ekphrasis) of his garden, in *Εἰκὼν καὶ λόγος: Ἐξ ἑβζαντινῆς περιγραφῆς ἔργων τέχνης*, ed. P. Agapitos (Athens, 2006), 130.

17 Pace Benia, “Ἰωάννη Γεωμέτρῃ, Εὐδόκιος,” 147, 253–54, who “confirms the views of the three scholars, namely van Esbroeck, Shoemaker and Booth, as far as the existence of a lost Greek prototype is concerned” (147). She dates it to the late ninth or early tenth century and argues that it was dependent on the *Life of the Virgin Mary* that is attributed to the early ninth-century monk Epiphanius of the Kallistratou Monastery in Constantinople. For this text see M. B. Cunningham, “The *Life of the Theotokos* by Epiphanius of Kallistratos: A Monastic Approach to an Apocryphal Story,” in Arentzen and Cunningham, *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium*, 309–23.

tendencies)¹⁸ while also adding his own ideas, as would be expected from an author like him. He promises a thorough investigation of all sources, because, in coming after “many others” who wrote, he would need to include what they said but also say more:

By touching upon these matters in cursory fashion, I will render, wherever possible, what is reasonable for our festal assembly, and what is seasonable for those who yearn for history, as well as our gifts of gratitude to the Virgin, who is the Mother of God, and Queen of all. And though I undertake to write after so many others, this is not worthy of condemnation, but rather should be seen as a matter of approbation, since my desire is not inferior to that of my predecessors. Indeed—and though it be a bold thing to say—the one who attempts such a feat after so many others must necessarily say everything that they have said along with something more. I have thus collected <material> from what I read not only in the evangelists and prophets, but even in apocryphal works—for these are in agreement with and follow the evangelists, the prophets, and the great and inspired fathers and teachers, as any impartial listener and judge will easily perceive.¹⁹

18 Cf. P. Magdalino, “Byzantine Encyclopaedism of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,” in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. J. König and G. Woolf (Cambridge, 2013), 219–31, esp. 222–23, on Basil the *parakoimomenos*, Geometres’ patron (on whom more below).

19 τούτων οὖν κατ’ ἐπιδρομὴν καὶ δι’ ὅσων ἐξὸν ἐφαψαμένοις, οὕτω τῇ τε πανηγύρει τὰ πρόσφορα, καὶ τοῖς ποθοῦσι τῆς ἱστορίας τὰ καίρια, καὶ τῇ Παρθένῳ δὲ καὶ Θεοῦ Μητρὶ καὶ Δεσποίνῃ κοινῇ πληρωτέον τὰ χαριστήρια. εἰ δὲ μετὰ πολλοὺς καὶ ἄλλους τῷ γράφειν ἐπεχειρήσαμεν, οὐ μέμψεως, εἰ μὴ καὶ ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιοι, ὅτε γὰρ πόθος οὐδενὸς τῶν ἄλλων λειπόμενος, ἀλλ’, εἰ καὶ τολμηρὸν εἰπεῖν, καὶ τῷ μετὰ πάντας ἐπιχειροῦντι ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ πάντων καὶ εἰ τι πλεόν των πάντων εἰπεῖν. συνείλεται δὲ καὶ ἡμῖν οὐ μόνον ὅσα παρὰ των εὐαγγελιστῶν τὲ καὶ προφητῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα παρ’ αὐτῶν των ἀποκρύφων ἀνελεξάμεθα· σύμφωνα καὶ ταῦτα δηλαδὴ καὶ ἀκόλουθα τοῖς εὐαγγελισταῖς καὶ προφήταις καὶ τοῖς μεγάλοις καὶ θεολήπτοις πατράσι καὶ διδασκάλοις· εἴσεται δὲ πάντως ὁ γε δίκαιος ἀκροατῆς καὶ κριτῆς. I have collated all three manuscripts of the Greek text: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 504, fol. 174r, dated to 1105 (available online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.504); the twelfth-century MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 215, fols. A/2v–A/3r (available online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b110002265>); and MS Genoa, Biblioteca

Given this clear acknowledgment of his authorial participation and agency within the Christian literary tradition, along with his stature as a leading writer, it is only reasonable to assume that Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin* was his own composition, using and reworking many sources in a creative way. Geometres seems aware that his text would be the most comprehensive treatment of the Virgin’s life produced by any author up to his time, although the influence of his precursors caused him some anxiety. As will be shown, his *Life of the Virgin* includes ideas and stylistic elements that are characteristic of him.

As far as the Georgian *Life* is concerned, my analysis will demonstrate that it bears all the marks of a work by Euthymios the Athonite, being clearly the product of his highly idiosyncratic translation technique. As a rule, Euthymios combined verbatim translation with minor and major changes, “such as excerpting and editing the texts under translation, inserting extensive interpolations from other sources, or compiling two texts into one,”²⁰ thereby often creating “translations that were of their own independent value as original works or new versions.”²¹ These new versions had to take into account both the limited theological background and the spiritual demands of his Georgian audience. By comparing samples of Geometres’ *Life* with the Georgian translation (the latter in Stephen Shoemaker’s faithful English translation), without the erroneous preconception that they both follow a lost Greek *Life*, I will show how Euthymios worked and modified his original source, and will also attempt to explain his choices in selected controversial passages. The Georgian translation is

Franzoniana, Urbanus 32, fols. 242v–243r, dated to 1321. Par. gr. 215 has been dated to the thirteenth century, but in fact belongs to the “typographic minuscule” script described and dated to the first half of the twelfth century by G. Parpulov, “Six Scribes of the Early Comnenian Period,” *Estudios bizantinos* 5 (2017): 91–107. A fourth manuscript, Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, E 100 sup. (gr. 307), fols. 135–170 (thirteenth century), offers a part of the *Life* only. It was thought that this manuscript transmitted an independent text, *Homily on Christ’s Deposition from the Cross*, but Benia (“Ιωάννη Γεωμέτρη, Εξόδιος,” 63) has recently discovered that it is identical to a section of the *Life*.

20 L. Khoperia, “The Georgian Tradition on Maximus the Confessor,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*, ed. P. Allen and N. Bronwen (Oxford, 2015), 439–59, at 440.

21 K. Bezarashvili, “From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism in Georgian Literature: Euthymios the Athonite,” *Scripta & e-Scripta* 12 (2013): 99–137, at 111.

unanimously attributed to Maximos the Confessor, although it is never transmitted with Maximos's other works.²² The earliest manuscript carrying this ascription is dated to around the year 1000 (MS Tbilisi, National Center of Manuscripts, A-40). However, it is difficult to establish whether it was Euthymios himself or a later scribe who attributed the Georgian version to the Confessor. Whoever did so was driven by a strong concern to establish authority and promote the text's influence: by conferring the name of such an unimpeachable authority on the *Life*, Euthymios or a later scribe guaranteed its wide reception. Maximos enjoyed great prestige among the Georgian public, and Euthymios's numerous translations of Maximos's works would help make the attribution credible—at least to a Georgian audience. Indeed, as will be noted below, this is not the only time we find among Euthymios's translations texts by other authors attributed to Maximos. Euthymios's own colophon to his Georgian *Life*, transmitted by Tbilisi A-40 (see below), may suggest that he himself published the work anonymously, following a metaphrastic practice for the reworked versions of earlier texts, even when the name of the original author was known.²³ Perhaps he thought that given all the changes he had made, it would not be appropriate or even necessary for his version to continue to be assigned to John Geometres, whose name would have meant nothing to his Georgian audience.

In addition to his numerous translations of Greek works into Georgian, Euthymios's literary output includes *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, a work highly praised for its literary qualities and one of the medieval world's best sellers. A recent thorough study and edition of the work has vindicated the views of Paul Peeters and David Marshall Lang that Euthymios was responsible for translating a Christianized life of the Buddha from Georgian to Greek.²⁴ His new version, reshaped and

supplemented as was typical for him, claimed that a monk named John, from the monastery of Mar Saba in Palestine, had transferred the text from the inner land of the Ethiopians to the Holy City—a statement that soon led to the attribution of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* to John of Damascus. In Lang's words: "If St. Euthymios the Georgian and his Athonite confrères were alive to-day, they would doubtless be gratified at the success which their literary hoax has enjoyed: their pious pastiche attributed to a great Father of the Church, its Buddhist heroes venerated as Christian saints, and generations of scholars set at loggerheads over the question of the tale's transmission from India to the West."²⁵

Euthymios's sincere intention was that his works, especially his Georgian translations, would enjoy the widest possible distribution and prestige in his homeland. I will argue that in his methods for reworking his Greek texts, Euthymios is very likely to have been generally influenced by the metaphrastic procedures followed by his contemporaries Symeon Metaphrastes and Nikephoros Ouranos, whose works were in his library and whom he almost certainly knew personally. Euthymios was a man of extraordinary education and talent, who had excellent resources at his disposal. Somewhat surprisingly, in the debates concerning the provenance of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin*, John Geometres is not the only one who has been wrongly neglected: Euthymios's background, abilities, resources, and translation techniques have also been largely ignored.

John Geometres

John Geometres (ca. 935–ca. 1000) is one of the most highly esteemed poets and authors in Byzantium. According to Paul Magdalino, "recent studies on the tenth-century poet John Geometres have consolidated and enhanced his reputation as one of the most highly accomplished Byzantine authors."²⁶ He was

22 For the contents of the manuscripts that transmit the Georgian *Life*, see van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur* (n. 6 above), i:vi–xi and Shoemaker, "The Georgian *Life*" (n. 4 above), 312, n. 21.

23 This appears to be the case even for some of the 14 or 18 texts (out of 148) that were incorporated into the *Menologion* with a new prologue and ending, but with no other changes. These were mostly ninth- or tenth-century texts, written in elevated language that satisfied the redactors. See Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 92.

24 *Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria)*, ed. R. Volk, vol. 6, part 2, of *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 2006–09). For the views of Peeters and Lang, see

P. Peeters, "La première traduction latine de *Barlaam et Ioasaph* et son original grec," *AB* 49 (1931): 276–312; D. M. Lang, "The *Life of the Blessed Iodasaph*: A New Oriental Christian Version of the Barlaam and Ioasaph Romance," *BSOAS* 20 (1957): 389–407.

25 Lang, "The *Life of the Blessed Iodasaph*," 406.

26 P. Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics of an Elite Religious Confraternity," in *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. T. Shawcross and I. Toth (Cambridge, 2018), 116–32, at 116.

“the poet laureate of his time”;²⁷ and with respect to his prose ekphrases (descriptions) and encomia Kristoffel Demoen thinks that “we can safely regard Geometres’ texts not as a display of superficial knowledge, but as evidence of a sophisticated and personal adoption and adaptation of the classical tradition.”²⁸ But despite being regarded as “one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Byzantine literature,”²⁹ we do not know much about his life, for which our only source is Geometres’ own poems.³⁰

John was the son of an imperial officer and must have received a good education. It is unknown why he was called “Geometres.” He seems clearly to have achieved an early reputation for his talents and acquired a remarkable degree of self-confidence, as the following epigram, “Εἰς αὐτόν” (“To Himself”), suggests:

Οὐρανίων, ἐπιγείων ἱστορα, τίς, λέγε, θῆκεν
ὀκτωκαιδεκέτη εἰσέτι σ’, Ἰωάννη;
θῆκέ με παμβασίλεια, καὶ ἡγορέην ἐπὶ τούτοις
δῶκεν ἀριπρεπέα· ῥήγνυσο μῶμος ἄπας.³¹

“Tell me, John, who made you an expert on things divine and profane, already at the age of eighteen?” “The Holy Virgin. But not only that; she also gifted me with magnificent courage. May you vanish altogether, Envy.”³²

27 M. D. Lauxtermann, “John Geometres: Poet and Soldier,” *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 356–80, at 365. Cf. Herbert Hunger’s view that “einer der begabtesten byzantinischen Dichter und zugleich fruchtbarsten Epigrammatiker ist zweifellos Johannes Geometres”: *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978), 2:169.

28 K. Demoen, “Classicizing Elements in John Geometres’ ‘Letters about His Garden,’” in *Πρακτικά ΙΑ’ Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Κλασσικῶν Σπουδῶν, Καβάλα 24–30 Αυγούστου 1999*, 3 vols. (Athens, 2001), 1:215–30, at 230.

29 K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur* (Munich, 1897), 731; Krumbacher also thinks that “für die im folgenden Jahrhundert beginnende litterarische Renaissance erscheint Geometres als ein beachtenswerter Vorläufer” (735).

30 For his life and works, see E. M. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre: Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques: Edition, traduction, commentaire* (Leiden, 2008), 3–19, and Lauxtermann, “John Geometres.”

31 *Carm.* 280, ed. van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, 436. Cf. L. R. Cresci, “Percorsi di self assertiveness nei Poemi di Giovanni Geometra,” in *Vie per Bisanzio: VII Congresso nazionale dell’Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini*, ed. A. Rigo (Bari, 2013), 93–103.

32 Translation by Lauxtermann, “John Geometres,” 360.

Indeed, knowledge and courage sum up his major qualities. He became both an author and a military officer of high rank, perhaps *protospatharios*, though it is impossible to say anything specific about his military career.³³ His poems reveal that his favorite emperor was Nikephoros Phokas, in whose court, as we will see, Euthymios the Athonite was raised. At some point Geometres lost his military appointment, perhaps when his patron, Basil the *parakoimomenos*, was dismissed in 985.

Apart from the *Life of the Virgin*, Geometres’ works include 300 poems on religious and secular themes, written in dodecasyllables, elegiac couplets, and hexameters;³⁴ five prosodic *Hymns to the Virgin*;³⁵ the *Homily on the Annunciation*;³⁶ five ornate letters (two praising his garden in Constantinople and three on an apple), as well as an encomion of the oak;³⁷ an encomion of Gregory of Nazianzos (unpublished);³⁸ commentaries on the rhetorical works of Hermogenes

33 Lauxtermann, “John Geometres,” 365. In a recent paper, Stratis Papaioannou questions Geometres’ military career and argues that Geometres’ work recommends him instead as a public speaker and a teacher, like John Sikeliotēs; see “Ioannes Sikeliotēs (and Ioannes Geometres) Revisited. With an Appendix: Edition of Sikeliotēs’ Scholia on Aelius Aristides,” in *Mélanges Bernard Flusin*, ed. A. Binggeli and V. Déroche, special issue of *TM* 23 (2019): 659–92, at 677–82. Papaioannou draws attention to a possible rivalry between Sikeliotēs and Geometres, perhaps revealed through a comment made by Psellos; to their similar literary output; and to the surname Γεωμέτρης, which “probably signifies someone who held, at least at some point during his career (perhaps early on?), a related teaching appointment” (681).

34 Most of them have been edited and translated by Van Opstall, *Jean Géomètre*, and M. Tomadaki, “Ἰωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ἰαμβικά Ποιήματα: Κριτική έκδοση, μετάφραση και σχόλια” (PhD diss., University of Thessaloniki, 2014), available online at <https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/handle/10442/35294>.

35 Edited by Sajdak, *Ioannis Kyriotis Geometrae Hymni* (n. 1 above). See also PG 106:853–68 and M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2003–19), 2:166–68.

36 PG 106:811–48. This text is discussed by Benia, “Ἰωάννη Γεωμέτρῃ, Εξόδιος” (n. 6 above), 46–62.

37 John Geometres, *The Progymnasmata*, edited by Littlewood (n. 11 above).

38 A few passages only have been published and discussed by P. Tacchi-Venturi, “De Ioanne Geometra eiusque in S. Gregorium Nazianzenum inedita laudatione in cod. Vaticano-Palatino 402 adservata,” *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto* 14 (1893): 133–62.

and Aphthonios;³⁹ and comments on four orations of Gregory of Nazianzos.⁴⁰

Geometres' poems include lively descriptions of gardens, the season of spring, and a church, as well as many penitential poems "to himself."⁴¹ The ekphrasis on spring ends with a long personal prayer, while in his description of the Stoudios basilica Geometres guides the faithful into the "heaven on earth" of the church building. There are parallel descriptions of summer and of the Lake of Gennesaret in the *Life of the Virgin*, as well as a description of spring in the *Homily on the Annunciation*.⁴² The penitential poems are less autobiographical and more didactic, in the sense that their purpose is to propel the audience toward compunction and contemplation. Spiritual direction is also offered in his numerous epigrams on icons and frescoes. These epigrams are extant primarily in manuscripts, but could in many cases have been originally inscribed on works of art. However, since there is a long tradition of Greek literary epigrams from the Hellenistic period onward written *as if* they were inscribed on real objects, in some cases these epigrams may only express Geometres' literary response to particular icons. They often invite the viewers to direct their thoughts to a certain feature of an icon and make them feel that the figures depicted are alive, just about to move or speak. Geometres' poetry here, together with these religious works of art, is in the service of devotion. In one such epigram, Geometres asks the viewers to pay close attention to

a depiction of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia freezing to death in an icy lake; if the viewers do so, they "may even hear the groans of the martyrs."⁴³ In another epigram on an icon of the Dormition, Geometres praises the painter for his realistic art: Καὶ τὴν πνοὴν ἔγραψεν, οἶμαι, ζωγράφος, / εἰ μὴ θανοῦσαν τὴν κόρην τυποῦν ἔδει (The painter, it seems to me, would have painted even the Virgin's breath, if he did not have to depict her as dead).⁴⁴ Geometres encourages the viewers' expectation that death had no ultimate impact on the Virgin Mary, and "when she left this earth, she did not abandon this world as well" (those are the words with which he closed his preface to the *Life of the Virgin*).⁴⁵ In a number of exquisite pieces, theological erudition is combined with poetic eloquence. For example, in an epigram on an icon of the Crucifixion (Εἰς τὴν σταύρωσιν), Christ himself highlights the paradoxes of the Creator's passion:

Τοὺς οὐρανούς ἤπλωσα, τείνομαι χέρας,
ἤρμισα τὴν γῆν, νῦν προσηλοῦμαι ξύλῳ.
θάλασσαν ἐξέβλυσα, νῦν δέ, πλάσμα μου,
πλευρᾶς τὰ καινὰ ρεῖθρα ταῦτα βλυστάνω.
πῦρ δημιουργῶ, τανύω τὸν ἄέρα,
λείπω τὸ θερμόν, ἐκπνέω. τί σοι πλέον;
γῆν νεκρὸς οἰκῶ, πλὴν ἀνιστῶ· καὶ τάφον
ἐκὼν ὑπελθών, ἐξανοίγω σοι πόλον.⁴⁶

I spread out the heavens, (but now) my hands are stretched out; I fixed the earth firmly, but now I am nailed to the cross. I caused the sea to gush forth, but now, my creature, these new streams flow out of my side. I create the heat (of the sun), I spread out the air, (but now) warmth leaves (my body), I breathe my last. What more do I do for you? I inhabit the earth as one dead, but I resurrect you. And being closed in a tomb willingly, I lay open the heaven for you.

39 These commentaries are lost, but many fragments are cited by John Doxopatre (an eleventh-century rhetorician and commentator) and other rhetoricians. For a discussion of Geometres' views on obscurity as expressed in these commentaries, see G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessalonike, 1973), 91–95.

40 Partly edited by J. Sajdak, *Historia critica scholiastarum et commentatorum Gregorii Nazianzeni* (Cracow, 1914), 89–95. See also R. Maisano, "Uno scolio di Giovanni Geometra a Giovanni Damasceno," in *Studi Salernitani in memoria di Raffaele Cantarella*, ed. I. Galo (Salerno, 1981), 493–503, at 501–3.

41 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 2:58–60, 66, 180–81.

42 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 53–55, ed. Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 6 above), 400–404 (description of spring); Vat. gr. 504, fol. 183v (description of the Lake of Gennesaret). Euthymios has omitted the first one and has reduced the second to the following sentence: "the lake of Gennesaret, which is great and famous, full of fish within and of various fruitful plants around it" (*Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximos the Confessor 69, trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin* [n. 2 above], 97). For the *Homily on the Annunciation*, see PG 106:841B–D and H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 46.

43 See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 1:149.

44 Iambic poem 158, ed. Tomadaki, "Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα," 161 (text and translation), 371 (commentary).

45 *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 174r): καὶ ἀπολιποῦσα τὴν γῆν καὶ τὸν τῆδε κόσμον οὐκ ἔλιπε. This is an allusion to the dismissal hymn (*apolytikion*) of the feast of the Dormition.

46 Iambic poem 93, ed. Tomadaki, "Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα," 113 (text and translation), 319–20 (commentary).

Geometres' verbal artistry in his rhetorical letters has been commended by scholars. For example, he describes the leaves of the trees in his garden as falling "with a gentle rhythmic and ordered movement, one after the other like a choir speaking in turn." Charles Barber remarks that "with such phrases Geometres weaves art and nature together."⁴⁷ Yet, even in his descriptions of nature, Geometres is interested in human emotions and relations: "when you enter the garden, your heart leaps, your soul quivers, you are entirely in midair, and you feel you are close to heaven."⁴⁸ In the encomium of the apple accompanying his gift of the fruit, Geometres begins by saying that Homer called milk "white," honey "yellow," and the fig "sweet," but he kept the word ἀγλαόν ("splendid" or "shining" or "bright") for the apple alone. Geometres adds that the apple is a delight to the eye; it can be red, white, pale, purple-red, or blended. It looks like a rose, smells like perfume, and tastes better than any other fruit. A delicacy for those in good health and a healthy food for those who are ill, it is also superior to the fig, which in dreams is a bad omen, while the apple portends glory and a crown. Among the virtues of the apple, Geometres includes more "human" qualities as well, such as beauty and stability over time. But in his third encomium of the apple he goes on to make some strange and unexpected remarks, which could be paralleled with some unusual theological notions he expresses in his *Life of the Virgin*. First, because of its spherical shape and ruddy color, the apple is rather unusually said to be a likeness (εἰκὼν) of the cherubim and seraphim. This idea may indirectly depend on Philo, who in his interpretation of Genesis 3:24 makes the cherubim, with their revolving and flaming sword, an allegory of the revolving spheres of heaven.⁴⁹

47 C. Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium: Nature and Sexuality," *BMGS* 16 (1992): 1–20, at 9–10. See also K. Demoen, "A Homeric Garden in Tenth-Century Constantinople: John Geometres' Rhetorical Ekphraseis of His Estate," in *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond*, ed. H. Bodin and R. Hedlund (Uppsala, 2013), 114–27. Henry Maguire has also identified a poem by Geometres as describing the imperial suburban park of Aretai: "A Description of the Aretai Palace and Its Garden," *Journal of Garden History* 10 (1990): 209–13.

48 See John Geometres, *The Progymnasmata*, 11.17–19 (text), and Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 1 above), 270.

49 See John Geometres, *The Progymnasmata*, 26.5–12 (text), 93 (commentary).

When, a few lines below, Geometres refers to the healing qualities of a decomposed apple (for scars, wounds, and tumors), he strikingly juxtaposes the rotten apple with Christ himself, who imitated our decomposition for the sake of our salvation.⁵⁰ And, finally, since the fragrance of the apple is conceptually but not physically separable from it, the fruit mirrors the intellectual but not physical Christian mingling of the human and divine.⁵¹ Geometres shows here, as in the *Life of the Virgin*, that he is capable of making unusual and unexpected remarks.

Geometres also wrote a poetic *Metaphrasis of the Nine Biblical Odes* (in 470 dodecasyllables)⁵² and possibly a verse *Life of St. Panteleemon*.⁵³ A collection of ninety-nine elegiac tetrastichs called *Παράδεισος*, mainly based on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, is also attributed to him but is of uncertain date and authorship.⁵⁴ The *Metaphrasis of the Nine Biblical Odes* is generally a faithful rendering of the biblical text, as one might expect when the Bible is the source text. However, even in this case, there are noticeable additions (of more than a few words) to and summaries of the source text, as well as, more interestingly, passages in the *Metaphrasis* that have no parallel in it. Marc De Groote, who has edited and studied the *Metaphrasis*, concludes that these cases are proof of the "innovative character" of Geometres, who "by reshaping his source text, succeeded in leaving us a work which can deservedly be called a new

50 See John Geometres, *The Progymnasmata*, 26.18–24 (text), 94 (commentary): "Fortunately such far-fetched extravagance mars only this encomium." Kazhdan (*A History of Byzantine Literature*, 271) thinks that Geometres here "almost verges on blasphemy."

51 See John Geometres, *The Progymnasmata*, 26.24–31 (text), 94 (commentary).

52 Edited by M. De Groote, "Joannes Geometres' *Metaphrasis of the Odes*: Critical Edition," *GRBS* 44 (2004): 375–410.

53 See K. Demoen, "John Geometres' Iambic *Life of Saint Panteleemon*: Text, Genre and Metaphrastic Style," in *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leuven, 2004), 165–84. Only one manuscript (of the fourteenth century), out of six, attributes this long poem (in 1050 dodecasyllables) to John Geometres. In another twelfth-century manuscript the content of the work is described as "μετάφρασις δι' ἱάμβων τοῦ μαρτυρίου τοῦ ἁγίου μεγαλομάρτυρος Παντελεήμονος" (*metaphrasis* in iambs of the *martyrion* of the holy great martyr Panteleemon).

54 See B. Isebaert and K. Demoen, "John Geometres and the *Παράδεισος*: A New Editorial Project," in *L'Épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique* (Paris, 2003), 139–51, and Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, 2:241–46.

creation.”⁵⁵ This is suggestive for how Geometres must have also reworked his numerous sources for his *Life of the Virgin*. The *Life of St. Panteleemon* was probably based on a known *Passio*;⁵⁶ and compared to Symeon Metaphrastes’ reworking of the same *Passio*,⁵⁷ John’s paraphrase displays a much greater freedom toward the source text while also exhibiting his knowledge of Greek tragedy: some of his verses are nearly verbatim quotations of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.⁵⁸

Geometres’ metaphrastic work is particularly interesting, because it associates him closely with his contemporaries Symeon Metaphrastes, Nikephoros Ouranos, and even Euthymios the Athonite, whose practices, I argue, are also in line with metaphrastic techniques. Moreover, in a recent article Paul Magdalino suggests that a lay confraternity attached to the church of the Theotokos in the *ta Kyrou* district formed a choir that included Nikephoros Ouranos and John Geometres, both military officials who “also expressed extreme piety in their writings, and neither is known to have married.”⁵⁹ Magdalino also draws attention to Ouranos’s friend Symeon Metaphrastes, whose “flesh was” also “innocent of all fleshly stains and his forceful manner of living sought only Christ”—that is, he was not married, according to a poem written by Ouranos lamenting Symeon’s death.⁶⁰ Symeon Metaphrastes lost his high office for the same reason John Geometres

apparently lost his military appointment: the dismissal of their common patron, Basil the *parakoimomenos*. Magdalino shows how the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou* was in the twelfth century the center of literary performances of “recited metrical prefaces,” followed by homilies,⁶¹ and similar evidence suggests competing events at the church of the Chalkoprateia. Already in the eleventh century, Michael Psellos describes the Friday evening “readings” at the church of the Chalkoprateia as being a major public attraction.⁶² Magdalino argues that literature was the hallmark of the church’s lay confraternity of the Kyriotai and that the church of the Theotokos Kyriotissa had been a source of literary inspiration since the time of the sixth-century hymnographer Romanos the Melodist, who received divine inspiration inside this church after eating a paper scroll in his dream (as directed by the Virgin Mary). Magdalino concludes that “this is surely the context in which to view much of John Geometres’ sacred *oeuvre*, especially his hymns and homilies to the Virgin.”⁶³

Indeed, two manuscripts indicate that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries at least, parts of Geometres’ *Life* were read during the Service of the Great Hours of Holy Friday.⁶⁴ And it may not be coincidental that the name “Kyriotes” is given to Geometres only in the title of the *Life of the Virgin Mary*, the *Homily on the Annunciation*, and the homily on the holy passion of Christ (which, as Anezoula Benia has shown, is not an independent text but a section of

55 See M. De Groote, “Joannes Geometres Kyriotes and His *Metaphrasis Odarum*,” *StP* 42 (2006): 297–304, at 304. Like Krumbacher, De Groote considers Geometres “a precursor of a period in which authors would no longer restrict themselves to collecting and preserving the literary legacy of their predecessors” (304).

56 Edited by B. Latyšev, “Hagiographica graeca inedita,” *Mémoires de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de St-Petersbourg*, 8^e série, 12/2 (1914): 40–53.

57 PG 115:447–77.

58 See Isebaert and Demoen, “John Geometres,” 147. C. Crimi, “Un sogno di Gregorio Nazianzeno (*carne* II,1,45, vv. 229 ss.) in Giovanni Geometra,” in *Philoi logoi: Giornate di studio su Antico, Tardoantico e Bizantino dedicate ad Ugo Criscuolo*, ed. F. Conti Bizzarro, G. Massimilla, and G. Matino (Naples, 2017), 167–86, discusses in detail how Geometres has rewritten in prose (in his *Encomion on Gregory of Nazianzos*) Gregory’s dream described in the latter’s *Carm.* II.1.45.

59 Magdalino, “The Liturgical Poetics” (n. 26 above), 122. This church, which may have been the earliest Marian shrine of Constantinople, was rebuilt after a fire in 1197 and has been identified with the mosque now known as the Kalenderhane Camii.

60 *σὰρξ ἄγνοῦσα σαρκικοὺς πάντας ῥύπους / βίος βιαστῆς Χριστὸν ἐκζητῶν μόνον*, ed. S. G. Mercati, “Versi di Niceforo Uranos in morte

di Simeone Metafraste,” in *Collectanea Byzantina*, ed. A. Acconcia Longo, 2 vols. (Bari, 1970), 1:565–73, at 569–70.

61 For this practice see T. Antonopoulou, “On the Reception of Homilies and Hagiography in Byzantium: The Recited Metrical Prefaces,” in *Imitatio—Aemulatio—Variatio*, ed. A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (Vienna, 2010), 57–79.

62 *Michaelis Pselli Oratoria minora*, ed. A. R. Littlewood (Leipzig, 1985), 137–51, no. 37.

63 Magdalino, “The Liturgical Poetics,” 130.

64 Vat. gr. 504, fols. 184v, 186r (notes in the margins). These notes are found in the section of the *Life* on the passion, which, as mentioned above, is also transmitted independently as a homily, under the title “By the blessed John Geometres Kyriotes, homily on the holy passion of Christ, read during the Hours of the Holy and Great Friday and until the Holy Resurrection.” Cited by Tacchi-Venturi, “De Ioanne Geometra” (n. 38 above), 147, n. 5, from MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, E 100 sup. (gr. 307). See also Benia, “*Ἰωάννη Γεωμέτρῃ, Εξόδιος*” (n. 6 above), 63, 116.

the *Life of the Virgin*).⁶⁵ The *Hymns to the Virgin* are χαιρετισμοί (salutations) in elegiac couplets. This similarity with the Akathist Hymn would make them especially suitable for performance in a church, perhaps followed by a homily. Some of Geometres' thoughts in the *Life of the Virgin* have parallels in these hymns, and also reflect his interest in images drawn from nature. For example, his argument in the preface of the *Life* that "just like a plant sprouting forth from a threefold root, this plant or young sprout [sc. 'the Virgin'], or indeed this beauty, emerged from three beautiful things, I mean from the priesthood, prophecy, and royalty, so that even the number might be a figure of the number of the Trinity" is also expressed in *Hymn* 2, vv. 3–4. What is more significant (as evidence of Geometres' authorship of both the *Life* and the *Hymns*) is the unique combination of Greek expressions used in both cases for "young sprout" and "threefold root" (ἔρνος and τριπλόκου or τριπλόου ρίζης).⁶⁶ Alexander Kazhdan found that in the hymns "rhetorical wordplay is abundant and sometimes quite effective": for example, when "the Virgin is described as releasing (λύτειρα) mankind from labor and saving (ρύτειρα) it from the tricks of the tyrant (*Hymn* 1, v. 5)." We will see below how Geometres thanked Christ for giving himself as a ransom (λύτρον) for our sake and for giving his mother as a daily remedy (λυτήριον). Kazhdan also made an astute observation that seems to confirm Magdalino's suggestions (mentioned above) regarding the choir of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou* and the cult of the Theotokos Kyriotissa as a source of literary inspiration. In a series of distichs in *Hymn* 4 (vv. 65–80), one of which is cited at the opening of this article, Geometres seems to stress "the close relation of the poet, contemporary ('our') 'bards' and the Theotokos," who is especially seen as their protector.⁶⁷

65 See Lauxtermann, "John Geometres" (n. 27 above), 358 (esp. n. 10), and Benia, "Ἰωάννη Γεωμέτρῃ, Ἐξόδιος," 63.

66 *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 174r): καθάπερ τριπλόκου ρίζης τουτὶ παγὲν τὸ φυτὸν ἢ τὸ ἔρνος ἢ καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἐκ τριῶν τῶν καλλίστων, ἱερατείας καὶ προφητείας καὶ βασιλείας, ἵν' ἢ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἀριθμὸς τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τύπος, ὡς ἕνα μὲν τέκοι καὶ αὐτὴ τῆς Τριάδος. Cf. *Hymn* 2, vv. 3–4 (ed. Sajdak, *Ioannis Kyriotis Geometrae Hymni* [n. 1 above], 64): Χαίρει μου, ὦ Βασίλεια, παναγνοτάτης ἀπὸ ρίζης / ἔρνος ἔφυς χαρίτων τρίπλοον ἐκ τριπλόου.

67 Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 1 above), 262.

In later generations, Geometres was granted considerable respect and authority.⁶⁸ An epigram honors "the famous John" as the eulogist of the "shining Virgin."⁶⁹ For John Doxopatres and Eustathios of Thessalonike, Geometres was "most wise" (σοφώτατος). In his commentary on Aphthonios, dated around the middle of the eleventh century, Doxopatres showed great respect for Geometres' judgment and cited him repeatedly as an authority.⁷⁰ Eustathios's reference comes in connection with an iambic poem by Geometres on the birth of Christ, which seems to have been lost.⁷¹ Although Geometres' profile as a poet and critic has received considerable attention, Geometres the theologian remains mostly unstudied. Riccardo Maisano has published a scholion by Geometres found in a fourteenth-century manuscript with works of John of Damascus, which he believes "confirms the authority and fame that John Geometres enjoyed in the medieval Greek world as a theologian of the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary and, consequently, of the nature of Christ."⁷² Having identified the scholion with a passage from Geometres' *Homily on the Annunciation*,⁷³ Maisano concludes that the *Life of the Virgin*, Geometres' magnum opus, is the "best testimony available to retrace the complex lines of John's theological thought on the problem of incarnation."⁷⁴ A century after Geometres' death, Niketas of Herakleia in his *catena* on the gospel of Luke (an anthology of patristic comments, perhaps compiled between 1105 and 1115), included forty-seven excerpts from Geometres'

68 See Lauxtermann, "John Geometres," 362.

69 See E. Kurtz, "Das Epigramm auf Johannes Geometres," *BZ* 4 (1895): 559–60.

70 See T. Gerber, *Quae in commentariis a Gregorio Corinthio in Hermogenem scriptis vetustiorum commentariorum vestigiaprehendi possint* (Kiel, 1891), 34.

71 PG 136:508.

72 MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1074, fol. 102^v marg.; Maisano, "Uno scolio" (n. 40 above), 497.

73 PG 106:812–48, at 832, lines B4–C6. A larger excerpt, including these lines, was also included in the *catena* on Luke by Niketas of Herakleia: see C. Krikones, *Συναγωγή Πατέρων εἰς τὸ Κατὰ Λουκᾶν Εὐαγγέλιον* (Thessalonike, 1973), 96 (entry 232, on Luke 1.38), and A. Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, 10 vols. (Rome, 1825–38), 9:643.

74 Maisano, "Uno scolio," 499.

writings, largely from the *Life of the Virgin* and the *Homily on the Annunciation*.⁷⁵

Geometres' authoritative status is also confirmed by an ironic and dismissive reference to him by the eleventh-century intellectual and writer Michael Psellos. In a theological essay on the interpretation of Philippians 2:7 ("but he emptied himself, by taking the form [μορφὴν] of a servant, being born in the likeness [ὁμοιώματι] of men; and being found in appearance [σχήματι] as a man"), Psellos attacked those who argued that although Christ's nature was exactly like human nature in its essence, it was different in respect to conception without a human father, birth with no labor pains, and absence of sin. For him both *σχῆμα* and *ὁμοίωμα* denote "the identical essence" (τὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἀπαράλλακτον). He closed this essay by saying that these are views also expressed by some of our own (τῶν ἡμετέρων), and even those who devoted themselves too much to philosophical studies (τῶν ἄγαν φιλοσοφῶντων), including Geometres:

These [sc. "views"] John Geometres also gathered (συνερανισάμενος) (I do not use this verb out of envy for the man) and published them as his own views on the passage, as if, it seemed to me, he was uttering an oracle from his prophetic chest. It is easy to destroy these arguments. Out of mercy not for this man, but for those who first expressed these views, I will spare refutations of these views. I will not disparage the profane views expressed by people who had a pious intention.⁷⁶

Who were these people who saved Geometres from Psellos's wrath? John Chrysostom, who wrote the most comprehensive treatment of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians surviving from Christian antiquity,⁷⁷ and

Theodoret of Cyrillus⁷⁸ certainly understood "in the likeness of men" as alluding to two of Christ's properties not possessed by humans: a conception without intercourse and a life with no sin. That the Virgin gave birth without pain—a doctrine since at least the seventh century⁷⁹—was something that Psellos himself had often defended. What he was not happy with was the association of these differences between Christ and human nature with Philippians 2:7. I have not been able to locate this view by Geometres in his published writings, but Psellos's criticism seems misplaced here. He chooses not to name the patristic authorities who had earlier expressed the views that he attacks, taking the opportunity to belittle only Geometres. Psellos might not have been impressed by Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* (as a rhetorical synthesis of earlier sources) and its theological digressions. The authoritative manner in which Geometres expressed some of his views (such as his claim, discussed below, that the Last Supper was not a Passover seder) might have annoyed Psellos. Arguably Geometres' great strengths lay outside biblical exegesis, and one wonders why Psellos did not criticize Geometres for any of his unusual theological interpretations. Perhaps these thoughts did not seem odd to the Byzantines, although Euthymios omitted some of them from his Georgian translation (see below). In any case, they did not circulate in subsequent Byzantine intellectual discourse and had no afterlife in the Byzantine world. Elsewhere Psellos, who appears very familiar with Geometres' work, complains as well that Geometres violated the laws of art with improper mixtures and many figures, which make him "very burdensome and faulty." Nevertheless, Psellos admits that Geometres was insightful and intelligent.⁸⁰

Modern scholars have praised the Georgian *Life* (which they have taken as following a supposedly lost model—whether by Maximos the Confessor or not—also used by Geometres) for synthesizing

75 See Krikones, *Συναγωγή*. These excerpts have now been studied closely by Benia, "Ιωάννη Γεωμέτρη, Εξόδιος."

76 *Michaelis Pselli Theologica*, ed. P. Gautier (Leipzig, 1989), 329–32, at 332 (opusc. 82, lines 101–7).

77 Text in PG 62:231; translation by P. Allen in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians* (Atlanta, 2013), 149: Τί οὖν ἐστὶν ὃ φησιν, Ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος; Πολλὰ μὲν εἶχεν ἡμέτερα, πολλὰ δὲ οὐκ εἶχεν· οἷον ἀπὸ συνουσίας οὐκ ἐτέχθη, οἷον ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησε. Ταῦτα ὑπῆρχεν αὐτῷ, ἃ μηδενὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (Then what is the meaning of "born in the likeness of humans"? On the one hand he possessed many of our properties, on the other he did not. For example,

he was not born from intercourse; for example, he did not commit sin. These characteristics were proper to him and to no human).

78 *De incarnatione domini* (PG 75:1420–77, at 1432–33).

79 See H. Maguire, "Pangs of Labor without Pain: Observations on the Iconography of the Nativity in Byzantium," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou (Leiden, 2012), 205–16.

80 Michael Psellus, *Theologica*, 181 (opusc. 47, lines 101–4). For this passage see now Papaioannou, "Ioannes Sikeliotes" (n. 33 above), 678–79.

various traditions of previous narratives, including ancient apocryphal sources, in order to produce a harmony.⁸¹ This is precisely what we would expect from an author as devoted to the Virgin Mary and as talented as Geometres. Given his rhetorical and poetic gifts, Geometres would have been able to draw on a great variety of sources and produce a highly rhetorical text, which would include some audacious expressions or ideas perhaps reflecting his poetic style and emotional intensity. Still, in his reworking of each source, Geometres may have remained at times close to his models, following to some extent the metaphrastic procedures of his age. But his ability to produce his own rhetorical text and to speak his own mind seems to have led him to a different kind of discourse, even when he follows the pattern of a source. Moreover, as he himself declared, overall he produced a text that was his own synthesis of a great number of sources, which included apocryphal writings, Origen, John Chrysostom, Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, John of Thessalonike, and Germanos of Constantinople. In addition, John was influenced by the writings of two ninth-century authors: Epiphanius of Kallistratou's *Life of the Virgin*⁸² and George of Nikomedia's homilies on Mary's role in the events of the passion.⁸³ Last but not least, given both Romanos the Melodist's and John Geometres' association with the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou*, it is tempting to assume that Geometres was also inspired and influenced by Romanos's depiction of the Virgin, especially in the kontakion "On Mary at the Cross," and by his treatment of the concepts of intercession and mediation.⁸⁴

81 See, for example, Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary" (n. 2 above), 456.

82 See Cunningham, "The Life of the Virgin" (n. 4 above), 153–55, and eadem, "The *Life of the Theotokos* by Epiphanius of Kallistratos" (n. 17 above).

83 George of Nikomedia, *Homilies* 8 and 9 (PG 100:1457–1504C); see J. Galot, "La plus ancienne affirmation de la corédemption mariale: Le témoignage de Jean le Géomètre," *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957): 187–208, at 202–3; Booth, "On the *Life*" (n. 4 above), 177–83; and cf. Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary," 458–59, 462, n. 74.

84 For the emphasis that Romanos places on the Virgin's role as mediator between Christ and the rest of humanity, see M. B. Cunningham, "Mary, the Mother of God, in Dialogue: The Drama of Personal Encounter in the Byzantine Liturgical Tradition," in *Personhood in the Byzantine Christian Tradition: Early, Medieval, and Modern Perspectives*, ed. A. Torrance and S. Paschalidis (Abingdon, UK, 2018), 68–79, at 72. See also T. Arentzen, *The Virgin in*

Indeed "the liturgical focus of the Kyriotai might have been the tomb of Romanos," and Geometres wrote an epigram in honor of the saint.⁸⁵

Discarding the mistaken idea that John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* is a copy of a supposedly lost Greek *Life* extant in a periphrastic Georgian translation opens Geometres' *Life* up to the objective study that its virtuosic literary and Marian theological elements deserve. The first scholars to work on this text, Antoine Wenger and Jean Galot, were unaware of the Georgian *Life*; free from the erroneous assumptions associated with it, they described Geometres' achievement more accurately than did later scholars. They correctly argued that the *Life* by Geometres is marked by intellectual vigor, noting that it is the first Byzantine Marian synthesis, written by a literary artist who was also a profound theologian and scholar.⁸⁶

Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist (Philadelphia, 2017), 137–40, 146, where Arentzen links Romanos's ideas to a few lines from the Georgian *Life* 76, trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin* [n. 2 above], 103): "she was not separated from her beloved Lord and dear son, not even for a single moment, because she was bound to him in soul and body. Thus from the beginning of the arrest until the end of the Passion she remained near him. She saw everything and heard his words. Because of this, the majority of the words spoken at that time and the things that happened before the Crucifixion and after, these the beloved and most blessed one told to the Evangelists and the other disciples." Euthymios remains close to Geometres' text (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 184v; Par. gr. 215, p. 143): τοῦ υἱοῦ οὐδ' ὅσον οἶον διεχωρίζετο, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ καὶ αὐτῇ συνεδέδετο καὶ τὸ σῶμα τῷ σώματι καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ τὴν ψυχὴν. Διὸ καὶ ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ μέχρι τέλους αὐτῷ παρακολουθήσασαν, εἰκὸς αὐτὴν καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ τῶν πρὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τῶν μετὰ τὸν σταυρὸν καὶ τοῖς εὐαγγελισταῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις μαθηταῖς ἀναθεῖναι.

85 The citation is from Magdalino, "The Liturgical Poetics" (n. 26 above), 125. The epigram (iambic poem 291), which was probably intended for inscription on an icon of the saint, reads as follows: Ὁ συγχορευτὴς οὐρανοῦ τῶν ἀγγέλων / καὶ γῆθεν ἄδει τὰς ἐκεῖ μελωδίας (The fellow chorister of the angels in heaven, sings the heavenly melodies from the earth as well), ed. Tomadaki, "Ἰωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ἰαμβικά Ποιήματα" (n. 34 above), 236 (text and translation), 441 (commentary).

86 Galot, "La plus ancienne affirmation," 207: "La vigueur intellectuelle déployée par Jean le Géomètre dans sa description de la vie de Marie est digne d'admiration. Loin de s'attacher aux détails concrets pour eux-mêmes, ni de demeurer dans le domaine des belles images et des épithètes poétiques, il s'est appliqué à dégager les principes, qui régissaient l'existence de la Vierge, et la mission que Dieu lui avait confiée dans l'économie du salut." Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 6 above), 188: "on peut dire qu'au point de vue théologique, elle est la première synthèse mariale byzantine faite par un homme qui est aussi profond théologien qu'il est fin lettré."

Euthymios the Athonite

The Georgian *Life of John and Euthymios*, composed around 1044 by George the Athonite (ca. 1009–1065), is a reliable source for the life of Euthymios (ca. 955–1028) and his father, John the Iberian (d. 1005).⁸⁷ John the Iberian and his young son Euthymios belonged to the rich and noble Chordvani family from Tao-Klarjeti. John decided to pursue the monastic life, first in the lavra of the Four Churches in Tao-Klarjeti and later on Mount Olympos in Bithynia. When, according to the *Life* (chapter 2), the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–69)⁸⁸ bestowed the Upper Lands on David of Tao, ruler from 961, he insisted that David should surrender some children of nobility as sureties. John's brother-in-law handed over his son Euthymios to the emperor as a hostage, together with other children of the aristocracy. Thus, Euthymios was brought up for a period at Nikephoros's court.⁸⁹ He was later taken by his father to Mount Athos and settled in the monastery of Great Lavra. This must have happened in the late 960s—certainly after the foundation of this monastery by Athanasios the Athonite in 963, but before the death of the emperor Nikephoros Phokas (969). The Georgians soon moved to a small establishment near Lavra, and sometime before 975 their relative John Tornikios joined them.⁹⁰ Tornikios had

served as a general under David of Tao, but around 970 he left the army and was tonsured a monk. When Bardas Skleros staged a rebellion against the emperor in 976, Basil II (r. 976–1025) summoned Tornikios to his assistance. Bardas Skleros was defeated in 979 and, as a reward for his services, Tornikios received the title of *synkellos* and great wealth, which he used to found on Athos in 979/80 the monastery of Iviron, whose first abbot was John the Iberian. After his death, Euthymios took over and kept the position from 1005 to 1019, when he resigned in order to concentrate on his translation projects.⁹¹

In a document dated to December 984 and preserved (in its original) in the archives of Iviron, Athanasios the Athonite declared that no one has “served and benefited” the Great Lavra community as much as John. Athanasios singled out John's “many” trips to Constantinople for meetings with the emperors, from Nikephoros Phokas to Basil II, who granted golden bulls for Lavra and John himself.⁹² In his *Diatyposis* (testament),⁹³ dated after 993, Athanasios named John, his “spiritual brother and father,” as a trustee (ἐπίτροπος) who would appoint a new superior in consultation with no more than fifteen monks, participate in the installation ceremony of the superior, act as overseer and corrector for the foundation, and remove an unfit superior. Following John's death, the trustee should be John's son Euthymios, Athanasios's own “spiritual child.” It is also worth noting that Nikephoros Ouranos, “the true lover of Christ and of monks,”⁹⁴ was appointed to serve as a lay trustee of the Great Lavra. We have already encountered Ouranos as a close friend of Symeon Metaphrastes and a writer of metaphrastic works, as well as a member of the same lay confraternity as John Geometres in the

87 For the life of Euthymios we also have a Georgian *Synaxarion*, which is earlier than 1044; it was one of the sources of George the Athonite's *Life of John and Euthymios*, which is considered accurate with some details that can be verified through sources that are still available. The *Life* has drawn on manuscript colophons and oral traditions, which in some cases could have still been direct. See *Actes d'Iviron*, ed. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, et al., 4 vols. (Paris, 1985–95), 1:4–6. The *Life* is available in English translation by T. Grdzelidze, *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh-Century Lives of the Hegoumenoi of Iviron* (London, 2009), 53–94; all subsequent page cites are to this text. There is also a French translation with detailed annotation by B. Martin-Hisard, “La Vie de Jean et Euthyme et le statut du monastère des Ibères sur l'Athos,” *REB* 49 (1991): 67–142. For Euthymios see also “Euthymios Athonites Iber 21960,” *PmbZ* 2.2:353–60.

88 The emperor is named in the *Synaxarion* but not in the *Life*; see *Actes d'Iviron*, 1:4.

89 Cf. M. Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium, 600–1025* (Berkeley, 1996), 364, who adds that “the Iberians had long had close ties with the Phokades. The Phokas family either was Iberian or more certainly had Iberian kinsmen.”

90 See J. Lefort and D. Papachryssanthou, “Les premiers Géorgiens à l'Athos dans les documents byzantins,” *BK* 41 (1983): 27–35.

91 According to George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 22, p. 87, Euthymios resigned after fourteen years as abbot because he “was hindered in his translation of the holy books but then, <after his resignation>, he remained in his cell <for most of the time>.”

92 *Actes d'Iviron*, 1:138 (Act 6, lines 10–16).

93 Edited by P. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster: Grösstentheils zum ersten Male* (Leipzig, 1894), 123–30. For introduction, translation, and comments (by G. Dennis and J. Thomas), see *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, ed. J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero, 5 vols. (Washington, DC, 2000), 1:271–80.

94 Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 125, lines 3, 22–23.

church of Theotokos *ta Kyrou*. According to the *Life of John and Euthymios*, Euthymios was offered the see of Cyprus by Basil II, but declined. After his resignation as an abbot of Ivron, Euthymios was summoned to Constantinople by the emperor Constantine VIII (r. 1025–1028) in his capacity as trustee of Athanasios's Lavra, on the occasion of a conflict that broke out in that monastery. Euthymios had to spend “a considerable length of time” in Constantinople;⁹⁵ and on 13 May 1028, the mule he was riding panicked and bolted, when a beggar approached covered in rags. Euthymios was thrown to the ground, and his severe injuries proved fatal.

These biographical details are not without relevance for Euthymios's work as a translator from Greek to Georgian and vice versa, as well as for his ability to use and interpolate various Greek sources. He spent time as a child at the imperial court, and for most of his life he lived in Greek-speaking regions. The *Life* says that John educated Euthymios “first in Georgian, but then gave him a full education in Greek.”⁹⁶ This comment may reveal some anxiety about Euthymios's Georgian; indeed, later on in the same chapter there is a hint that Euthymios was, in a very real sense, a native speaker of Greek and needed to work on his Georgian. We are told that Euthymios revealed to his father a miracle of the Virgin Mary, saying,

“A glorious queen stood up before me and spoke to me in the Georgian language: ‘What is it? What is wrong with you, Euthymios?’ And I told her: ‘I am dying, <my> queen.’ And as soon as I said this, she came close, took my hand and said: ‘Nothing is wrong with you, get up, do not be afraid and <hence> speak the Georgian language fluently.’ And so I am fine as you see.” And blessed John continued: “Until then, his Georgian had not been good and I worried for this reason but since then ceaselessly, like the spring water, <the Georgian language> purer than that of any other Georgian flows from his mouth.”⁹⁷

This story is an obvious reminiscence of the Romanos legend. Like Romanos, Euthymios owes his linguistic prowess in the Georgian language to the Virgin Mary, following a night vision.⁹⁸ Moreover, whereas Romanos's rough voice “turned sweet” after his vision, similarly through Euthymios's translations the Georgian “language and church were sweetened.”⁹⁹ It is also worth mentioning that apart from John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin*, Euthymios also translated another Marian work, John of Damascus's *Homily on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary*.¹⁰⁰

In addition to being raised in the imperial court, Euthymios frequented the capital throughout his life. His father was a longtime associate of Athanasios the Athonite and had ties with a number of emperors. Both men probably made repeated visits to the monastery's dependency in Constantinople.¹⁰¹ Euthymios must have followed closely the literary activity in the imperial city, and he is likely to have had personal acquaintance or correspondence with important administrators and scholars, such as Symeon Metaphrastes and Nikephoros Ouranos. This is reasonable to assume, but it is also suggested by a number of volumes in his own library, as will be noted below. It may also be suggested by a letter sent by Symeon Metaphrastes to the monastic communities of Olympos, Kyminas, Latros, and Athos, asking

98 Could this indicate that Euthymios as well might have been attached to the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou*, where Romanos the Melodist received his similar vision? And could Athanasios the Athonite's appointment of a Kyriotes, Nikephoros Ouranos, as a lay guardian of the Great Lavra indicate that he was himself a Kyriotes during his time in Constantinople? These hypotheses are advanced not with any confidence but to suggest that it is indeed possible that these people had more in common than is recorded in their vitae and other documents.

99 For Romanos see J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 191. For Euthymios see George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, p. 68. The way the Virgin Mary addresses Euthymios is strikingly similar to the words used in the same vita of Romanos, edited by Grosdidier de Matons: “Τί ἐστιν σοι, Ῥωμανέ; Τέκνον εὐλογημένον, τί θλίβῃ;” (“What is it, Romanos? What saddens you, blessed child?”).

100 For Euthymios's works see M. Tarchnisvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur, auf Grund des ersten Bandes der georgischen Literaturgeschichte von K. Kekelidze* (Vatican City, 1955), 126–54.

101 In the *Typikon* of Athanasios for the Lavra Monastery, dated to 973–75, there is a provision for a dependency (μετόχιον) for the use of the monks when they need to stay in the City (see Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden*, 114, lines 17–18).

95 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 23, p. 88.

96 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, p. 66.

97 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, p. 67.

them to pray for the success of Nikephoros Phokas's imminent expedition against the Hamdanids. As far as Athos is concerned, the letter seems to indicate Symeon's acquaintance with Athanasios the Athonite and John the Iberian.¹⁰² Euthymios thus had every opportunity to find and consult any texts he wanted.¹⁰³ His translations were eagerly anticipated by his fellow Georgians and reached them very soon after their production. For example, his translation of the Apocalypse and of Andrew of Caesarea's commentary on it was copied as early as 978 in the "Lavra of Krania" in the Bithynian Olympos by a Georgian monk named Saba.¹⁰⁴ The *Life of John and Euthymios* notes that David of Tao was receiving his translations and requesting more.¹⁰⁵ The *Life* lists more than fifty authors and works translated by Euthymios, specifying that this catalog is not exhaustive. It includes works by Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Makarios of Egypt, John Chrysostom, Maximos the

Confessor, John Klimakos, and John of Damascus, as well as the Constantinopolitan Typikon-Synaxarion.¹⁰⁶

In order to make his translations accessible to Georgian readers of varying levels of literacy, Euthymios "had to create simplified, abbreviated or extended, interpolated, and sometimes compiled translations."¹⁰⁷ According to Lela Khoperia, a good example of Euthymios's free attitude toward the Greek sources is his translation of Maximos's *Dispute with Pyrrhus*. Realizing that his audience would find the work highly complex, Euthymios removed sophisticated theological and philosophical arguments, as well as historical narrations of secondary importance. Thus he offered "a translation that is a somewhat simplified resumé of the text yet comprehensive and concise, and that concentrates on the key problems of the work."¹⁰⁸ In the case of Gregory of Nazianzos's *Oration* 43 (a eulogy in praise of Basil), Euthymios omitted various references to Greek mythology and history, as well as affairs of ecclesiastical politics; these included a quarrel between Basil and his predecessor, details of which Gregory himself preferred "to pass over in silence."¹⁰⁹ In the same vein, Euthymios omitted a paragraph from Gregory's *Oration* 39 that describes some obscene ancient Greek mysteries, concerning which Gregory said that he was ashamed to bring what is "performed in darkness into the light of the day."¹¹⁰ Last but not least, Euthymios produced a "tendentiously abbreviated version of

102 Symeon Metaphrastes, *Letter* 83, ed. J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du X^e siècle* (Paris, 1960), 146–47. The letter must refer to the expedition led by Nikephoros Phokas in 964, and not to earlier events (*pace* Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* [n. 12 above], 84), since the foundation of Great Lavra by Athanasios in 963 must be considered a terminus post quem. It is also worth mentioning that Athanasios the Athonite first took the monastic habit in Kyminas in Bithynia, under Abbot Michael Maleinos, uncle of Nikephoros Phokas, while John the Iberian was on Mount Olympos in Bithynia before going to Athos. The communities addressed in these letters were apparently closely associated with Symeon Metaphrastes and Nikephoros Phokas.

103 It would be reasonable to assume, and in fact has been proven, that Euthymios was also in the habit of borrowing books from the library of the Great Lavra of Athanasios; see L. Khoperia, "Maximos the Confessor: Life and Works in the Georgian Tradition," in *Maximos the Confessor and Georgia*, ed. T. Mgaloblishvili and L. Khoperia (London, 2009), 25–48, at 37. John the Iberian had donated several Greek manuscripts to this library; see George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 8, p. 62, and H. Métréveli, "Le rôle de l'Athos dans l'histoire de la culture géorgienne," *BK* 41 (1983): 17–26, at 22. Concerning Theophanes, a Greek scribe working at Iviron (to whom I refer later), Euthymios once remarked: "He copied books for monasteries here and there worth more than 1,500 drahkani [gold coins], also making copies for the other monasteries" (*The Life of John and Euthymios* 23, p. 87).

104 MS Tbilisi, National Center of Manuscripts, H-1346. See "Euthymios Athonites Iber 21960," *PmbZ* 2.2:354, 359.

105 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, pp. 67–68.

106 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, pp. 68–70. The "Testament" of John the Iberian, found on fols. 332v–336v of codex Mount Athos, Iviron, Georgian 10 (late tenth century), also contains a list of 30 translations by Euthymios. See R. P. Blake, "Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la bibliothèque de la Laure d'Iviron au Mont Athos," *ROC* 28 (1931–32): 289–361, at 339–44.

107 Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism" (n. 21 above), 102.

108 Khoperia, "Maximos the Confessor," 28–29.

109 *Oration* 43.28.2–3. See Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 42–43, ed. J. Bernardi (Paris, 1978), 188. For Euthymios's omissions, which include paragraphs 15.11–30, 45, and 58.15–37, see *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzenii Opera: Versio Iberica*, vol. 4, *Oratio XLIII*, ed. B. Coulie, H. Metreveli, et al. (Turnhout, 2004), vi.

110 See B. E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London, 2006), 129, and *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzenii Opera: Versio Iberica*, vol. 5, *Orationes XXXIX et XL*, ed. B. Coulie, H. Metreveli, et al. (Turnhout, 2007), viii, 42.

Gregory of Nyssa's *De oratione Dominica*, in which Origen was ignored."¹¹¹

While the omission of content deemed scandalous or difficult for his audience was one principle of Euthymios's method, the interpolation of edifying passages was another. In Gregory of Nazianzos's *Oration* 43, mentioned above, Euthymios added five miracles taken from the pseudo-Amphilochian *Life of Basil* and a new epilogue to Gregory's oration. Elsewhere, extensive passages from Maximos's *Dispute with Pyrrhus* and Michael Synkellos's *Expositio Fidei* were interpolated into the *Life of Maximos the Confessor*.¹¹² Euthymios also created new texts based on other patristic texts. Ketevan Bezarashvili explains that the reason he did not translate Gregory's *Oration* 24 (on St. Cyprian) is that he "used its rhetorical passages for composing the Georgian text of the panegyric on Demetrios of Thessalonike."¹¹³ Another example is "the abbreviated version of Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita Moysis* in which the exegetical and rhetorical passages were left out, and which was enriched with dogmatic and theological discussions in order to explain the obscure allegorical-mystical pieces."¹¹⁴ In a few cases, Euthymios produced more faithful translations. Apart from his translations of biblical texts, in his translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita S. Macrinae* "there is not a single example

of important additions to the text."¹¹⁵ This was a short work, written in a straightforward narrative style, and thus did not require modification; the same is true of the Galbios and Candidos legend that was interpolated from Symeon Metaphrastes into the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* (as noted below).

Recent scholarship on Euthymios's translations has confirmed beyond any doubt Korneli Kekelidze's view that Euthymios was mostly interested in adaptations of his models and not in proper translations. Nonetheless, scholars (since the time of Ephrem Mtsire, another Georgian scholar and translator of the second half of the eleventh century) have tried to explain why Euthymios's Georgian versions are often quite different from the extant Greek originals by arguing that he may have been working from different originals (which have since been lost).¹¹⁶ It is prudent to allow, if only in a few cases, for this possibility, but it has by now been demonstrated that in most cases it is more likely that these compilations were Euthymios's own work. Thus, it is not credible to continue positing missing Greek originals for Euthymios's compilations or looking in vain for new versions of known Greek texts, when it is very well established that his translation techniques permitted what is essentially the creation of new versions of works originally written in Greek.

Aiming at a broad Georgian public, Euthymios wanted his translations to be adapted to the needs of his audience. He was the first to introduce to Georgians a wide range of theological and philosophical notions. Indeed, by ensuring that his translations would be accessible, he managed to successfully

111 Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism," 103.

112 Khoperia, "Maximos the Confessor," 41 (commenting on this particular case): "the character of these interpolations fully conforms to Euthymios's method of translation and purposes, which are quite explicitly seen also in his other translations."

113 Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism," 124. Bezarashvili notes that in this case Euthymios acts "with full understanding of the metaphrastic theory, which was newly developed at that period." She does not elaborate on this observation, beyond adding: "Euthymios composed his 'Panegyric on Demetrios' according to the rhetorical model of *Or.* 24 by Gregory. This newly revealed fact once again displays Euthymios's perfect learning in the art of rhetoric, namely in the metaphrastic theory." The association of Euthymios's practices with metaphrastic procedures is in my view crucial to understanding Euthymios's work, as I discuss later. Euthymios's *Barlaam and Ioasaph* was already called "a Greek Metaphrastic, i.e. stylized and ornate, adaptation" (of the original Georgian version) by D. M. Lang, trans., *The Balavariani (Barlaam and Josaphat)* (London, 1966), 38. Cf. *Historia animae utilius*, ed. Volk (n. 24 above), 1:59–61.

114 Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism," 103.

115 See *ibid.*, 103, 111–12 (with n. 43), 122–23.

116 For example, when Ephrem Mtsire retranslated John of Damascus's *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, he signaled the existence of an abridged compilation of the same work by Euthymios, whose translation was titled *Hodegos*. Ephrem recalled that the *Hodegos* was a work of Anastasios of Sinai, not of John of Damascus, and he remarked that he did "not know whether it is our Father Euthymios who made the choice himself, or whether he found it so in the Greek." Quoted in Flusin, "From Arabic to Greek," 488, n. 32. Cf. Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism," 111, n. 40. For more examples, see van Esbroeck, "Euthyme l'Hagiorite" (n. 7 above), 81, 103; T. Otkhmezuri, "Euthymios the Athonite and Commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus' Writings," *Phasis* 9 (2006): 183–93, at 188; A. Chantladze, "Euthymios the Athonite's Translation of Maximus the Confessor's *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*," in Mgaloblishvili and Khoperia, *Maximos the Confessor and Georgia*, 49–58, at 58.

introduce new philosophical and theological concepts into the Georgian vocabulary, in such a way that the new terms sounded natural in the Georgian literary language.¹¹⁷ Euthymios was quickly considered a great national author in Georgia: a “jewel to our nation,” writes the author of his *Life*, “an imitator of the holy Apostles, who enriched the Georgian language and the Georgian land.”¹¹⁸ As we have already seen, the liberties that he took when producing his translations were considered divinely inspired. In contrast to Euthymios, a century later the Gelati literary school favored accurate and faithful translations; but its leader, Ephrem Mtsire, praises highly Euthymios’s work, which he says “shines above all churches [i.e., Christian congregations],” while his own translations are “for those rare individuals who can understand”—that is, a small circle of intellectuals.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Ephrem praised the “beauty and elegance” of Euthymios’s translations of Gregory of Nazianzos, but he also admitted that in some cases Euthymios’s liberties were controversial. Ephrem had to translate Gregory of Nazianzos’s sixteen liturgical homilies anew, because differences between Euthymios’s translation and the original caused complaints from Greeks.¹²⁰ When Ephrem found that Euthymios had added a part of Gregory of Nazianzos’s *Oration 2* to his translation of *Oration 3*, he stated that in his own translations he did not combine different works in this way, adding, “Because of the long time we do not know whether it [i.e., the joining of *Orations 2* and *3* in Euthymios’s translation] happened because of the scribes, or because of the Greek original used by St. Euthymios or because of the changes introduced by Euthymios himself, which was in accordance with his time.”¹²¹ Thus, Ephrem thought that it was possible that Euthymios himself was responsible for the combination, because such a blending “was in accordance with his time.” This statement is perhaps clarified by his definition of *metaphrasis* (in distinction to *translation*):

We have heard it said that books were embellished by Symeon Logothete and other scholars, but it is necessary to know which books can be adorned, and for which books this is impossible. For if they [i.e., the Greek metaphrasts] find a *Life* or a *Martyrdom*, a eulogy or even some written account in a rustic or inappropriate style, then they may stylistically enhance it, ornament it and this is called “metaphrase,” that is, ornamentation. And they do this when the author of the eulogy is uncultivated and does not rank among the saints as is the case for most Acts of the saints, which were written by the servants who shared their cell. In these cases, they can enhance the work using a discourse such that it is said to be by the same person, and does not cut out any of the details, nor add any. But the works of saints and the writings of the orthodox Fathers no one dares to touch, just as if they were the holy Gospel and the Epistles of Saint Paul, even if they were written in a simple style: no scholarly or orthodox writer dares, unless he is stupid, or rather heretical and apostate from the Church.¹²²

Elsewhere, mostly in colophons, Ephrem stated that unlike Euthymios, he “shall avoid all additions [of words] and insertions [of the words] from the commentaries” into the text of the orations of Gregory of Nazianzos. In addition, his own translations of Gregory’s orations were different, because he does “not allow [himself] the liberty of leaving out a word untranslated of [his] own accord.”¹²³ Euthymios had gone far beyond what Ephrem would accept within the scope of metaphrastic procedures. These methods used by Symeon Metaphrastes, applied only to hagiographical texts of low style, are strikingly similar to Euthymios’s practices: the usual process was for the old text to be rephrased, with additional information sometimes included. Church histories, the Bible, miracle stories, and hagiographical texts on other saints were used

117 See Métréveli, “Le rôle de l’Athos,” 23.

118 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 1, p. 55.

119 Quoted in Bezarashvili, “From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism,” 108, n. 33.

120 See *ibid.*, 108, n. 32, 115–16 (with n. 57).

121 Quoted in *ibid.*, 111, n. 40, with a reference to MS Tbilisi, National Center of Manuscripts, A-292, fol. 279.

122 Translated in B. Flusin, “From Arabic to Greek, Then to Georgian: A Life of Saint John of Damascus,” in *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*, ed. S. F. Johnson (Farnham, 2015), 488, citing Ephrem Mtsire, *Ioane Damakeli Dialectika*, ed. M. Rapava (Tbilisi, 1976), 68 (chaps. 8–9).

123 Quoted in Bezarashvili, “From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism,” 110, n. 37.

as sources of supplementary material. In a few cases, Symeon may have combined the stories of two different saints into one text. And even when a text was incorporated into the menologion in an already-existing version (perhaps with a new prologue and ending added), the name of the original author was retained in the title only in some cases.¹²⁴

Euthymios was familiar with a great number of metaphrastic texts; he translated at least seven of them into Georgian¹²⁵ and quoted from forty-eight or fifty metaphrastic *Lives* in his own *Barlaam and Ioasaph*.¹²⁶ It seems that he almost certainly knew Symeon Metaphrastes and Nikephoros Ouranos personally and was inspired and encouraged to employ metaphrastic procedures in his own translations. Euthymios must have seen his translations more as metaphrases—in his case, using not purified and rhetorically embellished language but rather content and language heavily edited and adjusted to make them accessible and comprehensible to a public that lacked a thorough grounding in theology and philosophy. It was Euthymios's goal to introduce to this Georgian public Greek works of high theological value, though in most cases they could be effective only in new, adapted versions. Contemporary metaphrastic practices, whose use in hagiography was limited, were employed by Euthymios in full force. Arguably, Euthymios had better reasons for such license than did Symeon Metaphrastes. Moreover, his translation program was very successful. As Ephrem Mtsire put it, “[H]e fed the spiritual infancy of the Georgian readers with the milk of his translations.”¹²⁷

While it would clearly be unfair to judge Euthymios by today's standards, it would likewise be unfair to judge him by the standards of the period that followed his death. It was only because of his successful

introduction of basic philosophical and theological concepts into the Georgian language that later faithful translations became possible. Even then, the literal renderings were destined for only a “few intellectuals,” as Ephrem Mtsire admitted. Those assessing Euthymios's translations should not overlook the context in which, and the public for whom, they were produced. He might have been encouraged personally by Symeon Metaphrastes to take the liberties he took, given that they were necessary to his goal of pious edification. It is worth mentioning that Symeon Metaphrastes intervened in his version of the *Life of Panteleemon*, when the saint concealed his conversion from his pagan father. He did so, Symeon explains, “not because he was fond of lying but in adapting his words to the circumstances according to his judgment: there are times when even deception is preferable, provided that its purpose is not wicked and slavish, but it is preferred on the principle of expediency.”¹²⁸

Introducing changes so that the texts could succeed with a particular audience was an actual metaphrastic practice that must have inspired Euthymios's work. Some of the changes made by Symeon Metaphrastes mirror his Constantinopolitan audience, as well as tenth-century political and moral discussions.¹²⁹ The same applies to Nikephoros Ouranos's metaphrasis of the old anonymous *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* (mentioned above), which was copied for Euthymios's library (see below). Nikephoros omitted some stories that he thought would not be appropriate for his audience—for example, the story of women who approach the saint because they are unable to lactate; the saint “prayed over them, giving thanks to God with a gracious face, and seizing their breasts with his own hand, he squeezed them, and with the milk that flowed out he sprinkled the eyes of the people who were present.”¹³⁰ But in general there is no obvious explanation for some of Ouranos's changes, and in some cases he may simply have tired at the length of the text and chosen to summarize a long story in a short paragraph. In his adaptation of the *Life of Theodore Tyron* (“the

124 See Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* (n. 12 above), 92, 100.

125 See Tarchnisvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur* (n. 100 above), 148–49.

126 For the ways in which Euthymios reused these metaphrastic texts, see C. Høgel, “Euthymios the Athonite, Greek-Georgian and Georgian-Greek Translator—and Metaphrast?,” in Binggeli and Déroche, *Mélanges Bernard Flusin* (n. 33 above), 353–64, at 361–64. This article appeared too late to be fully taken into consideration here, but I refer to it where relevant. Høgel has independently confirmed some of my conclusions regarding Euthymios's significance.

127 Quoted in Khoperia, “The Georgian Tradition” (n. 20 above), 440. Cf. T. Otkhmezuri, “Searching for Euthymios the Athonite's Autograph,” *Le muséeon* 130 (2017): 196 (with n. 62).

128 Quoted in Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 1 above), 246; Kazhdan notes that Symeon here “introduces the notorious notion of the goal justifying the means.”

129 See examples and discussion in *ibid.*, 240–42.

130 *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger* 138 (ed. Van Den Ven, *La vie*, 1:129).

recruit”), Ouranos changed the preface, and in the last part he replaced the eight miracles of his original with the popular miracle of the “boiled wheat” (κόλυβα) during the reign of Julian.¹³¹

Apart from altering the contents of texts that he translated, Euthymios seems to have also ascribed compilations of various texts to Maximos the Confessor. His version of the *Questions to Thalassius* comprises one hundred questions and answers, instead of the sixty-five in Maximos’s *Questions to Thalassius*. They include sections not just from Maximos’s work, as well as from his *Questions and Doubts*, but also from the *Questions and Answers* by Anastasios of Sinai, in addition to other questions and answers whose source is not yet identified. Because the first question in Euthymios’s collection belonged to Maximos, the whole collection was attributed to the Confessor. Kekelidze argued that “Euthymios attributed to Maximos something he had never written.”¹³² Similarly, in his translation of the *Ambigua to John*, Euthymios interpolated material from commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzos’s homilies by Basilios Minimus and George Mokenos, which are again attributed to Maximos the Confessor. Tamar Otkhmezuri argues that Maximos was named as the author of the whole commentary on Gregory’s *Oration 38* because of the magnitude (half of the entire text) and significance of his text.¹³³ But an additional explanation is also possible: the prestige of Maximos among the Georgian public was so great that any text circulating under his name would be well received and widely read. This is likely the reason why either Euthymios or a later scribe attributed the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* to Maximos the Confessor; Maximos and John of Damascus were perhaps the two church fathers most closely linked with Georgia.¹³⁴

131 F. Halkin, “Un opusculé inconnu du magistre Nicéphore Ouranos (la Vie de S. Théodore le Conscriit),” *AB* 80 (1962): 308–32, at 310–11.

132 Chantladze, “Euthymius” (n. 116 above), 57, with a reference to K. Kekelidze, “Issues of the Classification and Geographical Distribution of Peoples in Old Georgian Literature,” *Studies in the History of Old Georgian Literature* 1 (Tbilisi, 1956), 168–82 (in Georgian).

133 T. Otkhmezuri, *Maximus the Confessor’s “Ambiguorum liber” in the Georgian Translation Tradition* (Tbilisi, 2016) (in Georgian, with an English summary on pp. 91–96), 93.

134 See M. Chikovani, “Maximus the Confessor in Georgian Legends from the Seventh and Eighth Centuries,” in Mgaloblishvili and

As mentioned above, John of Damascus is associated with another Euthymian work, the Greek *Barlaam and Ioasaph*. The Georgian *Balavariani*, a version of the life of Buddha, is clearly behind the Greek version of the work, whose late tenth-century terminus post quem is confirmed by citations of Chrysostom from the compendium of Theodore Daphnopates (who died 961/63),¹³⁵ as well as by quotations from Symeon Metaphrastes.¹³⁶ *Barlaam and Ioasaph* soon spread throughout Christendom with translations in several languages. The Greek adaptation is considered the most learned and refined version of the tale, showing Euthymios to be a gifted writer of extraordinary abilities. It may well be that he was asked to translate this work by Symeon Metaphrastes and those in his circle,¹³⁷ who are likely to have found the story attractive.¹³⁸ Euthymios reshaped the text, omitting repugnant ideas (such as the burning of corpses with fire) and naïve dialogue,¹³⁹ and he added numerous biblical and patristic quotations, as well the *Apology of Aristides*, a second-century text that today survives in its entirety only in Syriac. This is an invaluable indication of the resources that both John Geometres and Euthymios would have been able to find in tenth-century Constantinople, of particular significance for the study of Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin* and Euthymios’s Georgian version: these authors could

Khoperia, *Maximus the Confessor and Georgia* (n. 103 above), 165–200, at 167, commenting on the fresco in the Holy Cross Monastery in Jerusalem that portrays the Georgian national poet, Shota Rustaveli, next to Maximos the Confessor and John of Damascus.

135 See *Historia animae utilis*, ed. Volk (n. 24 above), 1:120.

136 As shown by J. K. Grossmann, “Die Abhängigkeit der Vita des Barlaam und Ioasaph vom Menologion des Symeon Metaphrastes,” *JÖB* 59 (2010): 87–95.

137 The connection with Symeon Metaphrastes was first suggested by Korneli Kekelidze, who also argued that Symeon wanted to use *Barlaam and Ioasaph* for his metaphrastic work. See E. Khintibidze, *Georgian-Byzantine Literary Contacts* (Amsterdam, 1996), 272.

138 Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 1 above), 265, has drawn attention to the similarities between the Barlaam story and the life of Saint Panteleemon for which there is a vita in the Metaphrastic collection, as well as the iambic metaphrasis of the saint’s martyrion attributed to John Geometres. For example, Pantoleon (Panteleemon’s heathen name), who is in conflict with his pagan father, is taught by an old man who lived in a secret place.

139 See Lang, “*The Life of the Blessed Iodasaph*” (n. 24 above), 401–2.

easily have had access to early texts that may not be extant today.¹⁴⁰

It is even possible to browse a significant number of books from Euthymios's own library, because they were copied and signed by Theophanes, a scribe directly associated with Euthymios. Theophanes, a monk and priest in Iviron monastery, is one of the two most famous scribes from Mount Athos.¹⁴¹ Before he left for what would be his last trip to Constantinople, Euthymios went to see Theophanes, whom he praised highly for his skills.¹⁴² Thirteen manuscripts by this scribe have come down to us, eight of them dated.¹⁴³ They include:

1. August 1004 – Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottobonianus 422: together with Athos, Kutlumuşiu 25 (next entry), our earliest dated manuscripts containing metaphrastic texts.¹⁴⁴ However, they contain not the normal metaphrastic selection of texts but what Albert Ehrhard called the “Vermischter Metaphrast”—that is, metaphrastic texts mixed with other texts.¹⁴⁵
2. October 1011 – Athos, Kutlumuşiu 25: metaphrastic texts mixed with other texts.¹⁴⁶
3. 1021/22 – Moscow, State Historical Museum, Synodalis graecus 162 (380 Vladimir): a non-menological hagiographic collection, offering, among other texts, the *Acts of Thomas* and the so-called Recensio

Mosquensis of the *Vita et Passio* of Maximos the Confessor.¹⁴⁷

4. 19 June 1023 – Moscow, State Historical Museum, Synod. gr. 15 (381 Vlad.): a homiletic and hagiographical collection, including possibly the earliest copy of Nikephoros Ouranos's metaphrasis of the *Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger*.
5. After 1020 – Moscow, State Historical Museum, Synod. gr. 176 (388 Vlad.), fols. 1–230: a menologion for September–November, with metaphrastic texts mixed with other texts.¹⁴⁸
6. Undated – Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Taurinensis 25 B. V. 5: a “magnificent manuscript” with a corpus of works by Maximos the Confessor; it was destroyed in 1904 by a fire in the Library of Turin.¹⁴⁹

Apart from being the earliest dated witnesses for metaphrastic texts, the first two manuscripts listed above transmit significant sources related to the Virgin: no. 1 (dated to 1004) contains two homilies on the Dormition by Andrew of Crete and the three homilies on the same subject by John of Damascus, Symeon Metaphrastes' text on the Dormition, and the apocryphal Dormition of the Virgin by Pseudo-John the Apostle; no. 2 (dated to 1011) contains George of Nikomedia's third homily on the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple. It is significant to observe here that these manuscripts highlight the breadth of Euthymios's resources; at the same time, though associated in some way with Euthymios's activities, they are only copies made at Iviron and should not be taken as evidence of when Euthymios had particular texts at his disposal. The earliest dated manuscript with a Georgian translation of a metaphrastic text is MS Mount Athos, Iviron, Georgian 79, an autograph of Euthymios dated to 990.¹⁵⁰

140 See *Historia animae utilis*, ed. Volk, 2:476–90.

141 The other is John of Lavra, the scribe of the original document from December 984 in the archives of Iviron (mentioned above). See J. Irigoin, “Pour une étude des centres de copie byzantins (suite),” *Scriptorium* 13 (1959): 177–209.

142 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 23, p. 87 (n. 87 above).

143 See E. Lamberz, “Die Handschriftenproduktion in den Athosklöstern bis 1453,” in *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali eli Bisanzio: Atti del seminario di Erice (8–25 settembre 1988)*, ed. G. Cavallo, G. De Gregorio, and M. Maniacci, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1991), 1:25–78, at 37–42, and Irigoin, “Pour une étude,” 200–204.

144 See Högel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* (n. 12 above), 130.

145 See A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1937–52), 3:793–94.

146 See *ibid.*, 3:130–32.

147 See B. Roosen, “*Maximi Confessoris Vitae et passionis graecae: The Development of a Hagiographic Dossier*,” *Byzantion* 80 (2010): 408–60, at 444.

148 See Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand*, 3:29.

149 *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, ed. C. Laga and C. Steel (Turnhout, 1980), xlv.

150 See *Historia animae utilis*, ed. Volk, 1:142, and Högel, “Euthymios the Athonite” (n. 126 above), 358–59.

John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* and Its Georgian Version: A Comparative Analysis

Although Geometres' *Life* was unpublished, with the exception of its concluding section, Michel van Esbroeck read the text from various manuscripts and realized how close it was to the Georgian *Life* attributed to Maximos the Confessor.¹⁵¹ It is regrettable that his account of the similarities between the two works cites no long excerpts and fails to clearly display just how strong the linguistic similarities between these two texts are. However, Wenger's 1955 publication of the concluding section of Geometres' *Life*,¹⁵² together with van Esbroeck's publication and French translation of the Georgian *Life* (and the subsequent English translation of this text),¹⁵³ could have enabled scholars to realize the extent of their resemblance. Phil Booth has noticed, for example, that Geometres' *Life* 36 and Georgian *Life* 114 are "almost identical."¹⁵⁴ This sample alone, which shows extremely close similarity along with some variation, leaves no doubt that either these texts both copy a lost model or one of them copies the other. Other comparable parallels have been discussed by scholars, and I have noticed verbatim or near verbatim copying, or very close paraphrasing, in a very great number of places across these texts. It is remarkable how obvious the likeness is even when one consults a good English translation (instead of the original

Georgian text). In some sections, at first sight the texts do not appear to be very close; however, careful analysis reveals that Euthymios has used Geometres' text in full but left little unaltered, even repositioning units of material in a single section as he redrafted and restructured the text according to his own understanding and interpretation of it. As has also been pointed out, these long *Lives* preserve the same narrative sequencing throughout.¹⁵⁵ John Geometres could not have been so blatantly slavish in his appropriation of a single source, which leaves only one solution: Euthymios, whom Ephrem Mtsire called the "great master of additions and omissions," is in fact the translator of Geometres. Although Mtsire's translation technique is very different, his comment was not critical but admiring. It was, Mtsire says, "by the grace of the Holy Spirit" that Euthymios was abridging or expanding his models: his additions were possible because of his immense learning and were meant to make his translations more suitable for their audience.¹⁵⁶

The passages cited below clearly illustrate Euthymios's approach to this translation. In the first paragraph, we can see how Euthymios takes into account every word in Geometres' dense text, which he expands and simplifies so that his translation is meaningful and easier for his Georgian public to grasp. Significantly, as is typical of his technique, he adds an allusion to Scripture (Heb. 10:12), as well as a sentence that appears to emphasize the Virgin's determination to intercede for God's people (marked in bold). On closer inspection, this sentence is not a simple addition but is Euthymios's version of his second omission below, where he skips first the entire third "We thank you" sentence and then more than half of the last one (Greek text marked in bold):

151 Van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur* (n. 6 above), 2:xix–xxviii. See Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin*" (n. 5 above), 131, n. 49, and Conostas, "The Story of an Edition" (n. 8 above), 329–30.

152 Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 6 above), 363–415.

153 Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin* (n. 2 above). Shoemaker's translation sticks closely to the syntax of the Georgian text, incorporating a number of improvements that Shoemaker was able to make to van Esbroeck's edition. There are also Italian and Modern Greek translations of van Esbroeck's French: *Testi mariani del primo millennio*, ed. G. Gharib, E. M. Toniolo, L. Gambero, and G. di Nola, 4 vols. (Rome, 1988–91), 2:185–289, and *Ἁγίου Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ, Ὁ ἀρχαῖος καὶ κατὰ πλάτος βίος τῆς ὑπερευλογημένης Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου καὶ Ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας: Μεταφρασθεῖς στὴν γεωργιανὴν γλῶσσα τὸν 1000 αἰῶνα ἀπὸ τὸν ἅγιον Εὐθύμιον τὸν Ἰβηρίτην*, ed. Hieron Kellion Hagiou Nikolaou Bourazere (Mount Athos, 2010). The Modern Greek translation was revised against the Georgian text by Greek-speaking Georgian monks on Mount Athos.

154 Booth, "On the *Life*" (n. 4 above), 186, n. 142. See Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 388–90, and Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 139.

155 Benia, "Ἰωάννη Γεωμέτρῃ, Εὐχόδιος" (n. 6 above), 238–49, has clearly displayed this close similarity in a table summarizing the structure and the contents of these two texts.

156 Quoted in Bezarashvili, "From the Old Literary Traditions to Hellenophilism" (n. 21 above), 115, and Otkhmezuri, "Searching for Euthymius" (n. 127 above), 195.

John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 58–59 (ed. Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 404–6)

Ἄ δε μοι μὴ λαμπρότερα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ λυσιτερέστερα· νῦν δευτέρα μεσίτις πρὸς τὸν πρῶτον μεσίτην, ἄνθρωπος θεοφόρος πρὸς ἀνθρωποφόρον Θεόν, ἀπαρχὴ τῷ Πατρὶ δευτέρα, τερπνὴ καὶ μετὰ τὴν πρώτην ἄμωμος. Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὑπὲρ πάντα λόγον τε καὶ καιρόν, καὶ οὐδὲ νοεῖν μὴ τι γέλλειν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἢ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς δώσομεν. Ἡμῖν δὲ τούτων μὲν ἀφεκτέον. Πρὸς δὲ τὸ πέρας ὁ λόγος ἤδη κατεπειγέσθω, βραχεία μὲν διὰ τὸ μῆκος, πολλὰ δὲ ὅμως διὰ τὴν χρεῖαν προσπειπῶν. Ἔσται γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς εὐχαριστήριός τε ἅμα καὶ προπεμπτήριος, ἡδὴ δὲ πάντως καὶ ἱκετήριος.

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι, δέσποτα καὶ οἰκονόμη πάντων, τῶνδε τῶν μυστηρίων, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ ὅτι τοιαύτην ἡμῖν ἐξελέξω τῶν σῶν διάκονον μυστηρίων. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι τῆς ἀφάτου σοφίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ φιλανθρωπίας ὅτι μὴ μόνον τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν ἑαυτῷ συνέδησας καὶ ὁμοτίμως ἑαυτῷ συνεδόξασας καὶ ὁμοθέως ἐθέωσας, ἀλλὰ καὶ μητέρα σὴν ἐξ ἡμῶν γενέσθαι οὐκ ἀπηξίωσας, καὶ ταύτην βασιλίδα πάντων, οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς, ἀπέδειξας. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι, κοινὲ πάτερ, ὅτι καὶ τὴν σὴν μητέρα κοινήν ἡμῶν μητέρα γενέσθαι πεποίηκας ἵνα μηδεὶς ἡμῖν λείπῃ τῶν γειναμένων καὶ δι' ἀμφοτέρων οὐ τῆς υἱοθεσίας μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀδελφικῆς κλήσεώς τε καὶ σχέσεως κατηξίωσας.

Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι τῷ τοσαῦτα μὲν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν δι' ἡμᾶς παθόντι, τοσαῦτα δὲ παθεῖν ὑπὲρ σοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν σὴν μητέρα παρασκευάσαντι, ὅπως μὴ μόνον τῶν παθῶν ἢ ὁμοτιμία καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῇ τῆς δόξης αὐτῆς ἐργάσῃται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν οὕτως αἰεὶ μᾶλλον πραγματεύσῃται σωτηρίαν, μεμνημένη τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν ὠδίνων καὶ τὸ φίλτρον ἔχῃ μὴ διὰ τὴν φύσιν μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν τῶν ὧν ἐσπούδασε παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ὑπόμνησιν.

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι τῷ δόντι μὲν ἑαυτὸν λύτρον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, δόντι δὲ μεθ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὴν σὴν μητέρα καθ' ἑκάστην λυτήριον ἵνα ἅπαξ μὲν αὐτὸς ἀποθάνῃς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, αὕτη δὲ μυριάκις ἀποθνήσκει τῇ προαιρέσει διακαιομένη καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ σοὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα δι' οὓς, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ πατήρ, οὕτω καὶ αὕτη τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς δέδωκεν ἢ καὶ ἐκδεδομένον εἶδε πρὸς θάνατον.

Life of the Virgin attributed to Maximos the Confessor 128–29 (trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 154–55)

I have said what is more brilliant and useful for us than all the rest. Now a second mediator has gone forth to the first mediator, a devout human being to the incarnate God, a second offering of our nature to the Father after the first one **who was himself sacrificed one time on behalf of all** [cf. Heb. 10:12], **and she is ever living to intercede on behalf of those who approach God through her.** But now such things are beyond our words and ability, and we are not able to grasp them with the mind, nor express them with language. That is why we have left out the hidden mysteries, because everything that the Lord wished, he did in the heavens and on earth. But let us, according to our own ability, offer thanks to the Lord and fulfill the debt of our discourse of praise and prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ and his supremely blessed and all-holy mother.

We thank you, O king and custodian of all mysteries, on account of all your good things and that you have chosen such a one to be a servant of your mysteries. We give thanks for your ineffable wisdom and the power of your love of humanity, you who not only joined and deified our nature but also saw fit to choose your mother from among us and established her as queen of all things.

We thank you who took upon yourself the Passion of Crucifixion and death for our sake, and you saw fit for the sake of your name to take upon yourself your holy mother in this world of so much labor and hardship, in order to make her partaker of your glory and by her prayers and intercessions to grant us eternal life.

We thank you who gave yourself as a ransom for our sake and also in your benevolence gave us your all-holy mother as a helper and intercessor for our sake, O lover of humanity and sweet king.

Euthymios translated into natural, plain Georgian, and to do so he very often was required to paraphrase the original Greek.¹⁵⁷ Maia Raphava has briefly described the principles of the “Athonite literary school” and its “quite free translations”: “Euthymios simplifies the complicated participial syntactic constructions of the Greek text, adjusting them to the natural structure of the Georgian language. He abbreviates lengthy complicated discourses, omits separate words and phrases, or contrarywise, he inserts words which are implied in the Greek context. Euthymios’s translation is thus orientated towards Georgian readers in order to make it easier for them to understand.”¹⁵⁸ In Hélène Métréveli’s words, he “had a gift for translating complicated theological passages in a clear and comprehensible style.”¹⁵⁹

The first omission, the short “we thank you” paragraph that Euthymios did not reproduce, reads in English: “We thank you, common Father, because you have also made your mother our common mother, so that none of us lacks any of the parents, and through both <parents> you have not only deemed us worthy of being your children, but also called and considered us your friends.” There seems to be no reason for Euthymios to deliberately omit this paragraph, and he probably dropped it inadvertently because of a common scribal mistake, a “saut du même au même” (jump from the same to the same). In this passage, there are five consecutive paragraphs beginning with “we thank you” (εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι); another follows (not included here). While translating, Euthymios looked at the beginning of the omitted paragraph (“we thank you”), looked away from Geometres’ exemplar, but skipped ahead to the next occurrence of the same phrase when he looked back. As a result, the intervening paragraph was overlooked.

The second case is more interesting. The last Greek paragraph of Geometres, which was not fully translated by Euthymios, reads in English translation: “We thank you because you gave yourself as a ransom (λύτρον) for our sake and because, after yourself, you also gave your

mother as a daily remedy (λυτήριον), so that you died once for our sake, but she dies numberless times voluntarily, as she is burning with compassion (just as she was for you as well) on behalf of those to whom she, together with the Father, gave her son or even saw him being given to death.” This passage was highlighted by Wenger for elevating Mary to the status of a “co-redemer.”¹⁶⁰ Euthymios seems to have found Geometres’ thought theologically daring. He omitted it here, but earlier in the first passage he added that Christ “was himself sacrificed one time on behalf of all, and his mother is ever living to intercede on behalf of those who approach God through her.” She “does not die numberless times,” but “she is ever living to intercede” for God’s people. Euthymios appears to have read the whole section in advance of its translation, because his addition in the first paragraph implies that he already had Geometres’ bold suggestion in his mind. This accords with his translation practice elsewhere in the Georgian *Life*, where he moves units of material around in a single section. It is possible that Euthymios first read an entire section in Greek, and then dictated his Georgian version to one or two scribes. Otkhmezuri has convincingly shown that MS Mount Athos, Ivion, Georgian 68 is the autograph of two of Euthymios’s assistant scribes, who wrote down Euthymios’s oral translation of Gregory of Nazianzos’s *Oration* 38 and a commentary on that oration. After Euthymios edited this draft, it was ready to be copied for distribution.¹⁶¹ Of course, we cannot know whether this was Euthymios’s standard way of producing his translations, but it is possible that he was influenced here as well by the working method of Symeon Metaphrastes: in a famous description of Symeon and his team at work, Michael Psellos appears to say that Symeon dictated to stenographers his text, which was subsequently given to regular scribes for the production of copies.¹⁶²

157 For a very helpful description of Euthymios’s basic translation techniques, see T. Otkhmezuri, “Euthymios the Athonite” (n. 116 above), 188–89. I am grateful to Lela Khoperia for discussing with me the Greek passage cited above and the corresponding Georgian text.

158 M. Raphava, “A Fragment of Maximos the Confessor’s *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* in Old Georgian Manuscripts,” in Mgaloblishvili and Khoperia, *Maximos the Confessor and Georgia* (n. 103 above), 87–100, at 93.

159 Métréveli, “Le rôle de l’Athos” (n. 103 above), 23.

160 Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 406, n. 1: “Dans ce beau passage, l’auteur affirme avec force la corédemption mariale, associée à la rédemption opérée par le Christ, et prolongeant celle-ci dans le temps.” Cf. Galot, “La plus ancienne affirmation” (n. 83 above); H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 2 vols. in 1 (1963–65; repr. New York, 1985), 1:198; and see now Constatas, “The Story of an Edition,” 334–35.

161 Otkhmezuri, “Searching for Euthymios,” 191–98.

162 *Michaelis Pselli Orationes hagiographicae*, ed. E. A. Fisher (Stuttgart, 1994), 285. See Högel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* (n. 12 above), 93–96; and E. A. Fisher’s translation of and comments on “Encomium for Kyr Symeon Metaphrastes,” in *Michael Psellos on Literature*

According to Christian Høgel, “oral reformulation offered certain advantages to the redactors: speed and the possibility of profound reformulation.”¹⁶³ Indeed, this method would better serve Euthymios’s free but insightful translations, with his abridging or expanding and sometimes rearranging of the content of the original text, than Symeon’s close and thorough paraphrasing.

Regarding Geometres’ bold thought, it is worth noting that although λύτρον (ransom) and λυτήριον (remedy) can be used as synonyms (in fact, Wenger uses “rançon” to translate both), and their meaning comes very close here, they do not have the exact same meaning. It is therefore likely that in employing these words, Geometres wanted simultaneously to distinguish and to connect the effects of Christ’s passion and of his mother’s suffering. The redemptive work of Christ and the Virgin is so intertwined that they can be described in two words derived from the same root, without being identical. Geometres seems to have been careful not to use λύτρον in relation to the Virgin Mary’s suffering, because in the New Testament the term is associated only with Christ’s death as a ransom (e.g., Mark 10:45). He argues that the Virgin Mary saves humanity every day from every kind of evil and possesses a constant sacrificial love for the world. But his juxtaposition of the Virgin’s passion with the passion of the Father is rather unusual, and without parallels in Greek patristic literature as far as I am aware. This is one of several unusual theological notions found in Geometres’ texts (we saw earlier how Geometres juxtaposed the healing qualities of a rotten apple with Christ himself). In this case, throughout the sequence of the “thank you” paragraphs, Geometres’ language is emotionally charged and his thoughts should perhaps not be taken as absolute theological or doctrinal claims.

In the introduction to his edition of the Georgian text, van Esbroeck noted that it is only after their respective prefaces that the two works become very close. More specifically, he observed that their common narrative begins from chapter 5 of the Georgian text, with the paraphrase of Psalm 44.¹⁶⁴ If we compare chapter 6

of the Georgian *Life*, which narrates the Virgin’s Entrance to the Temple, with the corresponding Greek text,¹⁶⁵ we confirm that these passages are remarkably similar. Euthymios was capable of producing an accurate translation of the Greek, though he usually chooses to make some changes for the benefit of his readers. In this passage, there are two changes: first, what scholars studying his translation techniques have frequently seen—namely, the insertion of biblical quotations and references. Euthymios added the number of the psalm (44) that he cites in the following paragraphs. Second, and more significantly, Geometres briefly says that these citations from the psalm could refer to the Virgin, “even though some thought that this prophecy was less about her and more about the church—this would not spoil the prophecy at all”;¹⁶⁶ but Euthymios felt a need to expand on the observation to make more plain that both views can be valid and that there is nothing wrong with understanding Scripture in more than one way. Thus he writes instead: “And even if some have interpreted these words as being about the Church, there is nevertheless nothing at all that impedes understanding them as being about the holy Theotokos. For words spoken by the Holy Spirit should not be understood only in one way but in many ways, for they are a treasure house of good things. And those Fathers who have interpreted these words as about the Church have spoken well, and likewise understanding the prophecy as being about the holy Theotokos is true and without error.”¹⁶⁷ As scholars working on Euthymios’s translations have repeatedly emphasized, “the basic goal of Euthymios’s approach to his Greek models was to adjust his translations to meet the spiritual demands of his contemporary Georgian public, making them more accessible to the ordinary reader who lacked a thorough grounding in theology and philosophy.”¹⁶⁸

I will now turn to a selection of passages that have been discussed by scholars in the framework of the debate regarding the authorship of the Georgian *Life*. As mentioned above and as noticed by van Esbroeck, the preface of the Georgian *Life* did not follow Geometres as closely

and Art: *A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics*, ed. C. Barber and S. Papaioannou (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2017), 215. The meaning of the passage is not entirely clear; see N. G. Wilson, “Symeon Metaphrastes at Work,” *Νέα Πώμη* 11 (2014): 105–7.

163 Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 96.

164 Van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:xxv.

165 Available in the three witnesses of this text: Vat. gr. 504, fols. 174v–175r; Par. gr. 215, fol. A/9r–A/9v; Genuensis Urbanus 32, fols. 245v–246r.

166 *κἄν τιςιν ἔδοξε μὴ περὶ ταύτης μᾶλλον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὁ λόγος, οὐδὲν γὰρ τῷ λόγῳ τὸ λυμαινόμενον.*

167 Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 40–41.

168 Khoperia, “The Georgian Tradition” (n. 20 above), 440.

as the rest of the text did. Geometres' preface is highly rhetorical, and Euthymios wanted to simplify it for his Georgian public. Also, making major changes in the preface of a hagiographical work was a common metaphorical practice, which must have been especially necessary if the new version of a work by a known author was being transmitted anonymously. In his simplified version, Euthymios kept Geometres' basic ideas¹⁶⁹ and made some additions, such as enthusiastic exhortations (mostly from biblical sources) and a song to the Virgin, right at the beginning. Later on, in a deviation from Geometres, he named patristic sources ("Gregory of Neocaesarea the Thaumaturgos, the great Athanasios of Alexandria, the blessed Gregory of Nyssa, and Dionysios the Areopagite, and others similar to them in virtue");¹⁷⁰ but he in fact copied these names (with the exception of Gregory "the Wonderworker") from Symeon Metaphrastes' text on the Dormition (15 August),¹⁷¹ one of only two texts in the Menologion related to dominical or Marian feasts.¹⁷² Even his citation of the *Protevangelium of James*—originally taken from Gregory of Nyssa, to justify the use of apocrypha—is copied from Symeon, whose text, as we saw, was present in Euthymios's library. But why did he add Thaumaturgos?

Euthymios must have had in mind the three homilies in honor of the Virgin Mary attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgos.¹⁷³ Also well known to Greek-speaking audiences was the appearance to Thaumaturgos of a

"larger than life" figure of the Virgin,¹⁷⁴ which was narrated by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgos* (where a credal formula is also inserted). But what was more important for Euthymios, who placed Thaumaturgos first in his list of sources, was that Thaumaturgos's Marian writings were already known to his Georgian public, who must have shown special reverence for this saint. The earliest known Georgian codex—the "Sinai Mravaltavi" (homiliary), MS Sinai, St. Catherine's Monastery, Georgian 32–57–33, dated to 864 CE—includes fifty different texts beginning with "the 'Speech of St. Gregory, Bishop of Neocaesarea, on the Annunciation of the holy Mother of God,' to be read as the first of three lections on this topic ('Lections of the Annunciation') on March 25th."¹⁷⁵ A strong allusion to the Marian apparition in Nyssa's panegyric is found in the Georgian Chronicle in the *Life of King Vaxtang Gorgasali* (fifth century), where the vision is confirmed by St. Nino, the Enlightener of Georgia.¹⁷⁶ In addition, a large passion of the Thaumaturgos is preserved in Georgian only.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, a small traveling icon from the tenth century depicts him, with the inscription "May Saint Grigol Neokesariel Thaumaturgos protect Sahakdukht from evil."¹⁷⁸ And later on, Thaumaturgos is depicted in Georgian churches next to Nicholas of Myra and Cyril (of Alexandria?).¹⁷⁹ Clearly, his name as one of the sources of the Georgian *Life* would have resonated strongly with Euthymios's audience in his

169 For example, Euthymios retains Geometres' arguments that "it is the duty of every tongue and every nature of humankind to glorify and praise" the Virgin; that no one could worthily praise the Virgin, and "even if all the nations of humanity came together, they would not be able to attain the worthiness of her praise and glory"—nevertheless, we should "according to our ability, show eagerness to laud and praise the mother of God" (Georgian *Life* 1; trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin* [n. 2 above], 37); that it would not be inappropriate to speak also about her son; that Joachim and Joseph were by nature from the tribe of David and through the law from Levi; and that his sources would include apocryphal writings.

170 For these names of sources, cf. the discussion in Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 14–15.

171 B. Latyšev, ed., *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1911–12), 2:347–48. Cf. van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:4, n. 4.

172 Högel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 120.

173 See N. Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden, 2003), 384.

174 Ibid., 246 (with n. 2).

175 See J. Gippert, "Mravaltavi: A Special Type of Old Georgian Multiple-Text Manuscripts," in *One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts*, ed. M. Friedrich and C. Schwarke (Berlin, 2016), 47–91, at 56–57. Cf. Tarchnisvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur* (n. 100 above), 426.

176 See S. H. Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (Farnham, 2014), 287. See also M. van Esbroeck, "The Credo of Gregory the Wonderworker and Its Influence through Three Centuries," *StP* 19 (1989): 255–66, at 264.

177 Van Esbroeck, "The Credo of Gregory the Wonderworker," 264.

178 *National Treasures of Georgia*, ed. O. Z. Soltes (London, 1999), 213. According to Nukri Kvaratskhelia, who wrote the description of this item, some scholars have dated this icon to the fifth century.

179 B. Schrade, "Maximus the Confessor as Monk and Hierarch: Some Remarks on His Georgian Iconography," in Mgaloblishvili and Khoperia, *Maximus the Confessor and Georgia* (n. 103 above), 227–48, at 241–43.

native Georgia and in other Georgian literary centers throughout the Byzantine world.

Symeon's metaphrastic text on the Dormition was also Euthymios's source for his interpolation of the Galbrios and Candidos legend. When Euthymios reached Geometres' *Life* at chapters 43–44 (Wenger), where there is a mention of the Virgin's belt and garment present in the capital, with a brief reference to Galbrios and Candidos,¹⁸⁰ he recalled the full story and decided to include it in his Georgian *Life*. He thus opened a new section (chaps. 119–24), which begins as follows: "But let us make known through our discourse on the glory of Christ God and in praise of his holy and immaculate mother, our hope and intercessor in all things, how the holy Theotokos conferred her incorruptible garment as a precious relic to the great city of Constantinople."¹⁸¹ The interpolated text that follows is a faithful translation of the last part of Symeon's metaphrastic text on the Dormition,¹⁸² with a few insignificant differences.¹⁸³ Such an interpolation is fully in line with Euthymios's habitual method of translation. At the very end of this interpolation, Euthymios chose to avoid Symeon's and Geometres' supposition that this garment must have been sprinkled with the Virgin's breast milk.¹⁸⁴ He instead wrote that

"the holy garment of the immaculate and all-praised Theotokos remains incorrupt from then until now."¹⁸⁵ Then he added a few lines about the belt, saying that it was also bestowed on Constantinople and the church of the Theotokos Chalkoprateia, which was built for this relic and where it was still kept in Euthymios's time. Geometres' *Life* mentions both the belt and the garment as priceless treasures of the imperial city. Euthymios replaced Geometres' short paragraph regarding the Galbrios and Candidos legend with the interpolation from Symeon and then added a few lines about the belt housed at the church of Chalkoprateia. The reason for this "rather abrupt and brief appearance" of the belt was Euthymios's wish to follow his model, John Geometres.¹⁸⁶ The additional information regarding Chalkoprateia had sentimental value for him, as he must have venerated both relics during his time in Constantinople. Such information would also be valuable for Georgian pilgrims to Constantinople.¹⁸⁷

Yet another example illustrates Euthymios's modification of Geometres. At some point, John Geometres calls the Virgin "another Paraclete." Wenger notes that applying this phrase to the Virgin shows Geometres' audacity, given that the term had been used by Christ (John 14:16) as a designation of the Holy Spirit:

Καὶ οὕτως ὁ φιλανθρωπότατος ἑαυτοῦ πάλιν, εἰ οἶόν τε εἰπεῖν, φιλανθρωπότερος γίνεται, διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ ταύτην ἐκλεξάμενος, καὶ τὴν οὕτω καὶ φιλάνθρωπον οὐ μητέρα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ μεσίτιν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ διαλλακτὴν, ἣν οὕτως ἐκατέρωθεν δεόμενος ἄφυκτον ἔχη καὶ ἀμετακίνητον τὴν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ῥοπὴν καὶ συμπάθειαν ὁ

180 Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 6 above), 394. Both the belt and the garment are mentioned in lines 16–17.

181 Georgian *Life* 119; trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 142–43.

182 About one-fifth of Symeon's text is devoted to the narration of the Galbrios and Candidos legend, which is also indicated in its title. Symeon Metaphrastes' account of this legend appears to be a simplified version of Theodore Synkellos's sermon *On the Virgin's Robe*. Cf. Booth, "On the *Life*" (n. 4 above), 173.

183 The corresponding text is Lатышев, *Menologii anonymi Byzantini*, 2:376.26–383.30. Symeon's straightforward narration suited a faithful translation by Euthymios. The few differences include the following (the references are to Lатышев): Euthymios leaves out Symeon's allusion to Luke 24:32 (379.23–24); he does not interrupt the woman's revelation to say that two men shuddered at hearing the truth (380.8); he adds a quotation from Psalm 131:4 (380.30–31); he leaves out Symeon's exclamation at the theft of the robe ("O blessed hands! O theft too great for criticism" [382.9–10]), Symeon's point that two men asked the woman to keep them in her prayers (382.16–17), and the name of the bay, Keratios (382.28); and he has also slightly reduced the praise for the old Jewish woman guarding the garment (377.34–378.6). Cf. Booth, "On the *Life*," 193, n. 168.

184 This remark in Symeon (Lатышев, *Menologii anonymi Byzantini*, 2:383.24–25) and Geometres (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 394.19–20)

recalls Theodore Synkellos's apparent reference to milk stains on the Virgin's garment (*Homily on the Virgin's Robe*, in *Historia haeresis monothelitarum*, ed. F. Combefis [Paris, 1648], 751–86, at 771D–E).

185 Georgian *Life* 124; trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 148.

186 Quotation from S. J. Shoemaker, "The Cult of Fashion: The Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and Constantinople's Marian Relics," *DOP* 62 (2008): 53–74, at 56.

187 For a different understanding of these passages in John Geometres and the Georgian *Life* (and in particular its mention of Chalkoprateia), based on the assumption of a lost original Greek *Life* (whether by Maximos the Confessor or not), see Shoemaker, "The Cult of Fashion"; Booth, "On the *Life*," 193; and Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin*" (n. 5 above), 123–25, 127, 141.

παράκλητος τοῦ Πατρός, καὶ ἄλλον ἑαυτοῦ παρά-
κλητον εὐρηκώς, ἀνατρέποντα μὲν καθεκάστην
τοὺς δικαίους αὐτοῦ θυμούς, διαπορθμεύοντα
δὲ πᾶσι τοὺς οἰκτιρμούς καὶ τὰς φιλοτιμίας
ἐπιδαψιλεύμενον.¹⁸⁸

And in this way, the greatest lover of mankind again surpasses himself, if it is possible to say this, in his love of mankind, having chosen her because of his love of mankind, and makes her, who also loves mankind, not only his mother but also his own mediatrix and mediator, so that by being beseeched from both sides the advocate of the Father has an inescapable and immovable inclination and compassion toward us, having found **another advocate** for himself, who could overturn every day his justified wraths and transmit to all his freely bestowed mercy and generosity.

Wenger comments on the complexity of the passage and summarizes Geometres' argument as follows: the Son intercedes with the Father on our behalf, and Mary intercedes with the Son.

Euthymios must have noticed the complexity of Geometres' Greek and have also sensed the boldness of calling the Virgin "another Paraclete." In his version (which does not correspond precisely to Geometres' Greek), he was able to clarify Geometres' argument and also avoid any bold or ambiguous expression:

and so through your intercessions with him, the gracious and benevolent one spreads forth his mercies and delights even more upon us, because *we have him alone as an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, as John the Evangelist and Theologian says, *and he is the expiation for our sins* (1 John 2.1–2). And you are also our advocate and intercessor with him: you turn away his wrath and anger, which comes justly on account of our sins and transgressions, but you spread forth his mercy and sweetness upon us.¹⁸⁹

The way Euthymios uses "advocate" is not a problem; Gregory of Nyssa, for example, had used παράκλητος (advocate) to designate saints.¹⁹⁰ But Geometres' "another Paraclete," which is a direct citation from the Gospel of John, is daring and confusing, and it seems that Euthymios took more than one step to avoid such confusion. First, he introduced a scriptural citation and modified it to highlight that there is only one advocate with the Father; second, he carefully qualified Geometres' statement that the Virgin is our advocate and intercessor with Jesus.

In a passage mistranslated by van Esbroeck and discussed by Shoemaker for its importance concerning the leadership role assigned to the Virgin Mary,¹⁹¹ it is again possible to understand how Euthymios treated Geometres' original. It initially appears (in the first paragraph below) that Euthymios has added a biblical reference (Matt. 27:55), but otherwise only simplified Geometres' text, so that it is comprehensible in Georgian. In the next lines, as Shoemaker has observed, the Georgian *Life* introduces the Last Supper "with a rather obscure passage wherein the subject is not altogether clear."¹⁹² The obscurity arises because Euthymios chose to omit Geometres' objection against the views of those who argued that the Last Supper was in fact a Passover seder. Either Euthymios disagreed with Geometres on this point or, more likely, he thought that the controversial topic would be unfamiliar or confusing to his Georgian public:

190 See *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford, 1961), s.v. παράκλητος A4.

191 Van Esbroeck understood the Virgin as sacrificing herself and being sacrificed at the Last Supper. See van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur* (n. 6 above), 2:64; Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary" (n. 2 above), 447–49; and idem, *The Life of the Virgin*, 190, n. 1.

192 Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary," 447.

188 Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 408.31–39 (with n. 2).

189 Georgian *Life* 130; trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 156.

John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin*¹⁹³

μικρὸν δὲ ἀνωτέρω τὸν λόγον ἀναληπτέον, ὅτι συνῆν μὲν, ὡς λόγος ἀπέδειξε, κατὰ πᾶσαν ὁδὸν καὶ πράξιν καὶ αὐτὴ τῷ υἱῷ, συνῆν δὲ οὐχ ὡς θεωμένη καὶ πάντων συναπολαύουσα μόνον, ἀλλ' ὡς καὶ τὴν προστασίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν συμμεριζομένη, καθάπερ τῶν ἀνδρῶν καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν ἐκεῖνος, οὕτω καὶ αὕτη τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ μαθητριῶν.

Ταῦτά τοι καὶ ὅτε τὸ μυστικὸν καὶ καινὸν ἐτελείτο δεῖπνον—οὐ γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὸ νομικόν, ὡς τινες ὑπελήφασιν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἀνόμως τὸν νόμον ἐπλήρου οὐδ' ἂν πρὸ τῆς νενομισμένης ἡμέρας τὲ καὶ τῆς ὥρας ἐτέλει τὴν ἐορτήν· οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν, ὥσπερ καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐορτὴν μέχρι τῆς μεγάλης καλουμένης ἡμέρας τῆς πεντηκοστῆς, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν ἔθυσεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν Ἰούδας τὸν ἄρνα παραδραμὼν τὸν ἄρτον ἐδείκνυ, καὶ τὸ μείζον τῶν ἐγκλημάτων ἀφείξ, τὴν τοῦ πάσχα παρανομίαν, ἐπὶ τὴν ἐλάττω τοῦ μυστικοῦ δείπνου συκοφαντίαν ἐχώρει, οὐδ' ἂν Ἰουδαῖοι τοῦ μὲν τὸ Σάββατον λύειν αὐτὸν ἡτιῶντο, τοῦ δὲ τὴν τηλικαύτην παραλύειν τῶν ἐορτῶν ἠφίεσαν· ταῦτά τοι καὶ οὐδὲ θῦσαι τὸ ἱερὸν αὐτὸν ἰστορήσεν εὐαγγέλιον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν ὥσπερ ἱερεὺς ἅμα καὶ ἱερεῖον, ἐσθίων καὶ ἐσθιόμενος, παρατιθεὶς καὶ παρατιθέμενος. Αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ μαθηταῖς παρεδίδου τὰ ὑψηλότερα, τοῦ θειότερου πάσχα τὰ σύμβολα, τὸ μὲν σῶμα καὶ αἷμα διὰ τοῦ ἄρτου τὲ καὶ τοῦ πόματος, τὴν δὲ ἀνωτάτω δόξαν καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα διὰ τῆς ἐσχάτης διακονίας καὶ ὑποπτώσεως, οὐ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάθη προτυπῶν μόνον καὶ τὴν διὰ τούτων δόξαν τὲ καὶ ἀνάστασιν, οὐδὲ τοὺς μαθητὰς προπαρασκευάζων ἅμα δὲ καὶ παραμυθούμενος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμῖν πᾶσι τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὑποδεικνύων ὁμοῦ καὶ νομοθετῶν πάσχα, τὸ διὰ μαρτυρίου καὶ ταπεινώσεως.

Life of the Virgin attributed to Maximos the Confessor 74 (trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 102)

But let us return to the beginning of this topic. As we said, she was always inseparable from her Lord and king and son. And she held authority: as the Lord did over the twelve disciples and then the seventy, so did the holy mother over the other women who accompanied him. As the holy gospel says, *There were many women who followed Jesus from Galilee and provided for him* [Matt. 27:55]. The holy Theotokos was the leader and director of them all. For this reason, when the mysterious and glorious supper took place,¹⁹⁴

and he sacrificed himself as a priest and was sacrificed, he offered and was offered, at that time the Lord Jesus took care of the twelve disciples and whomever else he wished, and he gave them the exalted mysteries, the signs of the divine Passover. By the bread and the cup he gave his precious body and blood, and with great humility he revealed the glory beyond understanding, and he foreshadowed his Passion and Resurrection and consoled and affirmed his disciples, and he made a representation of the true Passover for us all and established for us, giving with suffering and humility.

193 Vat. gr. 504, fol. 184r–v; Par. gr. 215, pp. 138–40; Genuensis Urbanus 32, fol. 278r–v.

194 The omitted part reads in English translation: “but not according to the Law as well, as some have argued; for he would not unlawfully fulfill the law nor celebrate the feast before its assigned date and hour; for it was not possible, as would be the case also after the feast until the so-called great day of Pentecost, and he could not have sacrificed; nor would Judas pass over the lamp and show the bread, or ignore the greater crime, the transgression of the law at Easter, and go ahead with the slander regarding the smaller offense at the mystical supper; nor would the Jews accuse him of not observing the Sabbath and pass by the fact that he did not observe such a great feast. On top of these, the holy gospel does not report that he sacrificed.”

The question regarding the Last Supper was an undecided and divisive one—the patriarch Photios, in his ninth-century account of a work on the date of Easter, by an unknown author whom he praises highly for his language and his ideas, refers to it as follows (*Bibliotheca*, codex 116): “This author says our Lord and God Christ celebrated Passover according to the Law in all the other years of his presence, but

not in the year he was betrayed. One must investigate this, because Chrysostom and the Church say that he did celebrate according to the Law before the mystic supper.”¹⁹⁵ Geometres’ unambiguous and confident view on the matter could be paralleled with his forceful rejection of the *Childhood of Christ* (or the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*), which was copied by Euthymios and has puzzled scholars:¹⁹⁶

John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin*¹⁹⁷

Τοῦτο πρῶτον δείγμα τῆς τοῦ παιδὸς Ἰησοῦ σοφίας τὲ καὶ δυνάμεως.

Τὰ γὰρ καλούμενα Παιδικὰ μὴ παιδαριώδους μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ δαιμονιώδους τιθώμεθα γνώμης καὶ προαιρέσεως, οὐ μόνον ὡς τῶν ἡμετέρων λογίων τὲ καὶ εὐαγγελίων παρέγγραπτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν κακοτέχνου τινὸς κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐπινοήματα, διαβάλλειν ἐκ τούτων τῶν μυθευμάτων ἐπιχειροῦντος καὶ τᾶλλα τῶν ἡμετέρων· πλὴν εἰ μόνον τις ἐκεῖνα προσδέχεται βούλοιο, παρὰ πολλῶν λεγόμενά τε καὶ πιστευόμενα ἂ μὴτε τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐναντιούμενα, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τοῖς

Life of the Virgin attributed to Maximos the Confessor 62 (trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 89–90)

This was the first teaching and divinely inspired doctrine of the wisdom and power of the infant Jesus. Thus he amazed his holy mother and Joseph and all those standing there, although they were not able to understand the meaning of his words completely [cf. Luke 2:50]. *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he was obedient to them. And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart*, as the holy evangelist says. *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and grace before God and human-kind* [Luke 2:51–52]. And all this time, from this moment until the baptism, transpired without the working of any public miracles. For the book that is called *The Infancy of Christ* is not to be received, but it is alien to the order of the Church and contrary to what the holy evangelists have said and an adversary of truth that was composed by some foolish men and storytellers.

195 Translated by N. G. Wilson, *The Bibliotheca: A Selection* (London, 1994), 128.

196 See Booth, “On the *Life*,” 165, 198 (with n. 177) and Shoemaker, “The (Pseudo-)Maximos *Life of the Virgin*,” 116–19. This passage of Geometres’ *Life* was included in the *catena* on Luke by Niketas of Herakleia; see Krikones, *Συναγωγή* (n. 73 above), 137 (entry 520, on Luke 2:49–50), and Mai, *Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio* (n. 73 above), 9: 655.

197 Vat. gr. 504, fol. 182v; Par. gr. 215, pp. 110–11; Genuensis Urbanus 32, fols. 271v–272r.

προφητικοῖς σύμφωνα, ὅτι καὶ τὴν ὥραν τοῦ σώματος ὥραῖος κάλλει παρὰ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ὅτι τῆς μητρὸς ἐμφερὲς καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἐπιτερπὲς, τῷ δὲ κάλλει τὴν ἡλικίαν ἀνάλογος καὶ ἰδεῖν μὲν χαριέστατος ὁμοῦ καὶ σεμνότατος, καὶ ὁμιλῆσαι γλυκύτατος ἅμα καὶ εὐγλωττότατος, ἐπιστρεφὴς δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐπὶ συννοίαις τὰ πολλὰ φαινόμενος, οἷα καὶ γέμων φρονήματος ἢ καὶ πνεύματος καὶ συνελόντα φάναι καθάπερ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ὁμιλίας καὶ καταστάσεως, εἰ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπον ὅρος καὶ λόγος, ἢ δὲ πραότης αὐτῷ τὸ ἐπίσημον.

But the evangelist Luke briefly relates the truth of the gospel's proclamation, and he says that *Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and grace before God and human-kind*, as we have made clear in the explanation of these words above. And he was truly full of all wisdom and grace, the source of wisdom and grace, and longed for by all wise and intelligent people, for he was handsome in bodily form, *in beauty beyond the sons of men* [Ps. 44:3], as the prophet says, striking in proportion and ideal in the measure of his body, fittingly radiant, and captivating and eloquent in speech. And his entire life was joyous and full of the Holy Spirit, and to put it briefly, as in all other good things, so also in human behavior and speech he was the model and definition of every good virtue, but his peace and goodness were unattainable and inexpressible by all.

The passage above illustrates well how Euthymios was able to simplify Geometres' sentences, while conveying accurately the essence of their meaning, by adding some familiar Gospel passages or other explanatory sentences. As we have already seen, inserting biblical quotations and references is characteristic of Euthymios's method.¹⁹⁸ What Geometres says regarding the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* agrees with his statement in the preface of his work (cited earlier) that he will use the apocrypha when they are in agreement with the evangelists, the prophets, and church fathers. The emphatic rejection here is intended to reassure his audience that he is very careful with his use of the apocrypha.¹⁹⁹ Euthymios was in theory against the use of the apocrypha, but in reality he even translated some of them.²⁰⁰ Moreover, there are places in the Georgian *Life* where he draws from apocrypha when there is no trace of them in Geometres' original.²⁰¹ We saw

that Euthymios agreed with and kept Geometres' initial statement (even reinforcing this view with a quotation from Gregory of Nyssa, copied from Symeon Metaphrastes); here he also approved of Geometres' emphatic rejection of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and its "rather mischievous portrait of the boy Jesus, whose often malicious behavior, unlike that of other children, could not so easily be ascribed to humanity's inherent sinfulness."²⁰²

Various other issues raised by scholars may now also be resolved. For example, it is clear that Euthymios offered a short synopsis of Geometres' quotation from *On the Divine Names*, omitted the extensive theological digression about the apostle Paul that follows,²⁰³ and resumed his translation from the next sentence.²⁰⁴ In the concluding paragraphs of his article on Euthymios as a translator, van Esbroeck argued that the Georgian

198 See Otkhmezuri, "Euthymius the Athonite" (n. 116 above), 189.

199 For an understanding of the rejection of this apocryphon as instead indicating a seventh-century composition of a supposed lost Greek prototype, see Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin*," 117–19.

200 See Tarchnisi, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur* (n. 100 above), 132–35.

201 For example, the citation from the *Protevangelium of James* in the Georgian *Life* 54, trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 82.

202 S. J. Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary's Hidden Past: From Ancient Marian Apocrypha to the Medieval *Vitae Virginis*," *Marian Studies* 60 (2009): 1–30, at 17.

203 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 11–15, ed. Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 6 above), 370–76; cf. Georgian *Life* 108, trans. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin*, 134–35.

204 The first sentence of John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* 16 (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 376, line 5). It is clear that Euthymios resumes from this line, though he keeps summarizing and paraphrasing Geometres' text.

Life quoted the *Protevangelium of James* literally, while Geometres transformed the quotation of his supposed model into a rhetorical paraphrase, because he could not recognize it. It follows, van Esbroeck went on, that Euthymios offered a literal translation of Maximos's work, while John Geometres offered a metaphrasis. As a result, van Esbroeck concluded, Euthymios is the best witness of the lost Greek text.²⁰⁵ I hope that by this point it is obvious that these arguments are not valid. Geometres' text is indeed rhetorical and often refers to the Bible through allusions, not literal quotations. Euthymios liked to quote the Bible and even add biblical quotations and explicit references to their source. This approach is characteristic of his translation style. Last but not least, there is nothing, in my view, to suggest a lost Greek text. In the study of these two texts, scholars should not underestimate Geometres' scholarship or Euthymios's unconventional translation practices and available sources. Euthymios was a scholar himself, and if he thought that a particular source or idea would benefit his audience, he would not hesitate to introduce it, either from memory or with the help of his excellent library resources.

The Dates of the Works

Wenger noticed that in the *Life*'s closing prayer to the Mother of God, Geometres asked for deliverance from the bloody civil wars and horrifying events witnessed in the capital. He therefore argued that the *Life* could have been written between 976 (death of the emperor John Tzimiskes) and 989 (defeat of Bardas Skleros). But in his view Geometres was probably alluding to an acute phase of fratricidal conflict, perhaps the revolt of Bardas Phocas (987–89).²⁰⁶ Marc Lauxtermann added that this closing prayer in the *Life*, with its descriptions of the horrors that the city had to witness every day, bears a striking similarity to Geometres' poem "On the Rebellion" (εἰς τὴν ἀποστασίαν),²⁰⁷ which

apparently also refers to Halley's Comet and is thus dated to 989 (the comet was seen in July and August of that year).²⁰⁸ His deduction may be valid, and the *Life* of Geometres could well have been composed between 987 and 989. However, Geometres' descriptions in the *Life* contain no allusion to Halley's Comet or anything else to prevent its dating to the first rebellion of Bardas Skleros against Basil II and Constantine VIII, which began in 976 and lasted until 979.²⁰⁹ Indeed, a poem by Geometres that alludes to both civil and external wars (as does the *Life of the Virgin*: "public and private, domestic and foreign wars and disasters")²¹⁰ was rightly taken by Maria Tomadaki to refer generally to the Bulgarian enemy and "the rebellions of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas (976–979 and 987–989)."²¹¹ If Geometres' *Life* was completed not in 976–79 but in 987–89, it would still have been entirely possible for Euthymios to translate it during the last decade of the tenth century. Euthymios was able to acquire early copies of works produced in Constantinople: for example (as mentioned above), he had access to early copies of single metaphrastic *Lives*,²¹² translated some of them, and reused heavily about fifty such *Lives* when writing *Barlaam and Ioasaph*. This point is particularly

208 See Lauxtermann, "John Geometres" (n. 27 above), 364, and Tomadaki, "Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα," 267.

209 See a brief but vivid report in Leo the Deacon, *History* 10.7; see *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. A.-M. Talbot and D. F. Sullivan (Washington, DC, 2005), 212–13. Cf. M. Tziatzi-Papagianni, "Το ποίημα του Ιωάννη Γεωμέτρη «Εἰς τὴν ἀποστασίαν»," *Ελληνικά* 52 (2002): 263–77, esp. 275, drawing attention to this earlier civil war as a possible allusion in Geometres' poem "On the Rebellion."

210 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 69, ed. Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 414: καὶ κοινοῖς καὶ ἰδίοις καὶ οἰκείοις καὶ ἀλλοτρίοις πολέμοις τε καὶ κακοῖς.

211 Iambic poem 235, ed. Tomadaki, "Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα," 206 (text), 415 (commentary). The poem allusively compares the Byzantine situation to the Peloponnesian War.

212 The earliest dated manuscript of the full metaphrastic corpus was copied later, in 1042, and is housed at Ivron monastery (MS Mount Athos, Ivron 16). See Högel, *Symeon Metaphrastes* (n. 12 above), 62–63, 130, and idem, "Euthymios the Athonite" (n. 126 above), 360, where Högel rightly wonders "how much the recognition, and later sanctification, of Symeon Metaphrastes was due to Georgian involvement. Two things point that way (though certainly yielding no proof): the surprising parallel fates of the Metaphrastic texts and Euthymios's *Barlaam*; and the status of Georgian and especially Ivron affairs at the Constantinopolitan court."

205 Van Esbroeck, "Euthyme l'Hagiorite" (n. 7 above), 104.

206 Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 414, n. 1; "La description de Jean le Géomètre peut donc convenir à toute la période qui va de 976 à 989. Il semble toutefois que l'auteur fait allusion à une phase aiguë de la lutte fratricide, peut-être à la révolte de Bardas Phocas (15 août 987–avril 989)" (193).

207 Iambic poem 7, ed. Tomadaki, "Ιωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ιαμβικά Ποιήματα" (n. 34 above), 56–59 (text and translation), 266–70 (commentary).

significant, given that it has now been established that Symeon's and Euthymios's active periods overlapped, and it is in fact possible that Euthymios started translating even before Symeon initiated his own project.²¹³

However, Shoemaker has argued that the attribution of the Georgian *Life* to Euthymios (found in MS, Tbilisi, National Center of Manuscripts, A-40) needs to be reconsidered, because Bernard Outtier has suggested to him that the "fragments of the *Life* now in the Matenadaran Library in Yerevan (MS 10257) are probably too early for Euthymios to have been the *Life*'s translator." Shoemaker argues that if indeed these folios are from the tenth century, as van Esbroeck maintained, then "it is difficult to see how Euthymios could be responsible for the translation, since he was active only at the very end of the tenth century—the Iviron Monastery where he worked was itself founded in the early 980s." Shoemaker also reports that Outtier estimates this manuscript to be from the later tenth century, and in personal correspondence Outtier shared with him the opinion of Alexey Ostrovsky, who noted that the tails on two letters "securely date the manuscript no later than the first decades of the eleventh century." Shoemaker admits that "this cannot definitely prove that the translation of the *Life* must have been made earlier than Euthymios's activity," but he finds more attractive the idea that the translation was produced at the monastery of Mar Saba.²¹⁴

Dating manuscripts primarily on the basis of letterforms is often an inexact and tentative enterprise, but if the folios could come from the late tenth century or the first decades of the eleventh century, as Outtier and Ostrovsky believe, then they are not too early for Euthymios to have been the *Life*'s translator. The earliest dated manuscript with Euthymios's translations is Mount Athos, Iviron, Georgian 32, copied on Athos in 977.²¹⁵ I have already mentioned another very early manuscript with Euthymios's translations, copied as early as 978 in the Bithynian Olympos. It follows that Euthymios must have started his translation project before 977—that is, by his early twenties and before the foundation of Iviron, as is also claimed in his

biography.²¹⁶ Shoemaker also cites Outtier's view that the Matenadaran MS "is unlikely to be of Athonite origin and more probably originates from the Georgian monasteries of nearby Tao." According to Shoemaker and his calculations, "it seems unlikely" that "a copy of this translation must somehow have found its way already to the monasteries of Tao within a period of less than 50 years."²¹⁷ But the dissemination of Euthymios's translations must have been rapid, as suggested by the early copy made in Bithynia. Again, his biography reports that David of Tao was receiving his translations and was sending "letter after letter with a plea to translate <more books> and to send them <back to the East>."²¹⁸ Euthymios's translations were eagerly anticipated by his fellow Georgians, whom they reached very soon after their production. Moreover, Jost Gippert has shown that the leaders of Iviron had close contacts not only with Georgia itself but with other Georgian centers as well, in the Holy Land and on Mount Sinai. Gippert confirmed "a close tie between the Holy Land and Euthymios's work on Mt. Athos," showing too that George the Athonite's redaction of the Gospels "must have reached St. Catherine's Monastery [on Mount Sinai] soon after it was accomplished."²¹⁹ George, Euthymios's biographer, served also as an abbot of Iviron (1044/45–1054 or 1056) and was famous for his own translations. According to his *Life* (written by George Mtsire), Giorgi-Prokhore of Shavsheti, the founder and abbot of the Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem, ordered copies of George the Athonite's translations when the latter was still alive.²²⁰

216 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, p. 68 (n. 87 above). See also *Historia animae utilis*, ed. Volk (n. 24 above), 1:74, 80; Høgel, "Euthymios the Athonite," 357; and V. Silogava, "St. Giorgi Mtatsmindeli (George the Hagiorite) about St. Eptvime Mtatsmindeli (Euthymios the Hagiorite)," in *Georgian Athonites and Christian Civilization*, ed. D. Muskhelishvili (New York, 2013), 97–104, at 99.

217 Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin*," 135–36.

218 George the Athonite, *The Life of John and Euthymios* 13, pp. 67–68.

219 J. Gippert, "The Georgian Hagiorites and Their Impact on the Centres of Georgian Eruditeness," in Muskhelishvili, *Georgian Athonites and Christian Civilization*, 75–83, at 78, 81. Cf. Métréveli, "Le rôle de l'Athos" (n. 103 above), 22.

220 *The Life of George the Athonite* 15, translated by Grdzeldze, *Georgian Monks* (n. 87 above), 124. See also Métréveli, "Le rôle de l'Athos," 25.

213 See Høgel, "Euthymios the Athonite," 358.

214 Shoemaker, "The (Pseudo-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin*" (n. 5 above), 2135–36.

215 See Otkhmezuri, "Searching for Euthymios" (n. 127 above), 183.

Shoemaker does not trust the testimony of Tbilisi A-40, which identifies Euthymios as the translator of the Georgian *Life*. This very early witness, dated by van Esbroeck to around the year 1000, is the earliest complete manuscript of the *Life of the Virgin* and was the basis for van Esbroeck's edition of the Georgian *Life*. Tamar Otkhmezuri, head of the Department of Codicology at the National Center of Manuscripts in Tbilisi, agrees with van Esbroeck's dating.²²¹ Otkhmezuri also agrees with my view that the attribution of the Georgian translation to Euthymios in Tbilisi A-40 is trustworthy, given this manuscript's contents and colophons. Apart from the *Life* (fols. 1–282v), the manuscript transmits one other text, Euthymios's translation of the *Sermon for Holy Friday* by George of Nicomedia (fols. 284–331v). Both texts end with a colophon ascribing the translations to Euthymios. These colophons, which have been cited by neither van Esbroeck nor Shoemaker, are similar to others found in manuscripts with Euthymios's translations and appear to originate from either Euthymios himself or his scribes.²²² The colophon at the end of the *Life of the Virgin* (fol. 282v) reads as follows: "Christ, the King of glory, by the help of your parent the holy virgin Mary have mercy and save the soul of humble Euthymios, who, on the holy Mount Athos, translated from Greek into Georgian this holy book of the life of the holy Theotokos."²²³ Indeed, Otkhmezuri thinks that this colophon originates "from Euthymios's autograph and belongs to him, as the scribes of his translations never call him 'humble.'"²²⁴ In my view, it is also significant that the colophon does not attribute the *Life* to Maximos the Confessor, but only the translation to Euthymios. As I have argued above, it is possible that Euthymios himself was not responsible for the attribution of this translation to Maximos the Confessor. The other colophon, following the text of George of Nicomedia, reads as follows: "Christ glorify the soul of father Euthymios, who translated for us this reading."

221 Personal correspondence with author, 8 July 2019.

222 See examples in Otkhmezuri, "Searching for Euthymius."

223 I thank Tamara Grdzeldze for the literal translation of this colophon, as well as the second one cited below. The translations were based on the transcriptions of the colophons cited in the description of the MS by L. Kutateladze in E. Metreveli, *K'art'ul xelnacert'a agceriloba: qop'ili saeklesio muzeumis (A) kolek'ciisa*, vol. 1.1 (Tbilisi, 1973), 121.

224 Personal correspondence with author, 8 July 2019.

That the colophon of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* is not found in later copies of the work should not undermine its value,²²⁵ as Shoemaker implies. Later scribes often copied such early colophons, but not always.²²⁶

Conclusions

In the years 976–79 or 987–89, John Geometres was bringing to completion the most comprehensive *Life of the Virgin* written up to that time. Geometres was a military officer and a gifted poet, but he was also a member of a lay confraternity associated with the church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou*, where he was a member of the choir and likely performed liturgical readings. His *Hymns to the Virgin* and his homiletic work (to which his *Life of the Virgin* belongs) can be safely associated with the literary "patronage" of the Theotokos Kyriotissa—a tradition that goes back to Romanos the Melodist, who was buried in the same church. Nikephoros Ouranos was another member of the same confraternity. He was a close friend of Symeon Metaphrastes and (apparently) of Athanasios the Athonite, who appointed him as a lay steward of his Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos, together with John the Iberian and his son, Euthymios the Athonite. Euthymios was brought up for a period of time at Nikephoros Phokas's court and later, according to his *Life*, acquired fluency in Georgian through a vision of the Virgin Mary, which was similar to the celebrated vision experienced earlier by Romanos. As an Athonite monk, Euthymios visited (possibly many times) the imperial city, where he must have frequented its great churches and met Nikephoros Ouranos, Symeon Metaphrastes, and perhaps even John Geometres himself.

Early in his monastic life, Euthymios set himself a goal to produce translations of Greek patristic and hagiographic works for his Georgian compatriots, who had few works of Christian literature available in their language. However, he soon realized that faithful translations were not what was called for, because

225 In Otkhmezuri's words: "the fact that no other MS of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* has a colophon with Euthymios's name does not decrease the possibility that Euthymios is the translator of this text, as NCM A-40 is the early witness of his authorship" (personal correspondence with author, 8 July 2019).

226 I thank Lela Khoperia and Tamar Otkhmezuri for discussing this point with me.

his audience had no advanced training in theology and would be unable to follow the works of difficult writers such as Gregory of Nazianzos and Maximos the Confessor. As a result, Euthymios produced free paraphrases and often new versions of patristic works, simplifying and editing their original contents so that they might be accessible to and influence a wide Georgian public. Ephrem Mtsire described these translations, approvingly, as “milk destined for babies” and “wine diluted with water.”²²⁷ Indeed, Euthymios was so successful that he was celebrated as “the enlightener of Georgians.” In his translation methods, Euthymios was inspired and encouraged by contemporary metaphrastic practices, perhaps even personally by Symeon Metaphrastes and Nikephoros Ouranos themselves. As we have seen, Symeon and Euthymios display striking similarities in their use of oral composition, dictation, and assistant scribes.

Euthymios’s translations included contemporary hagiographical works by Symeon Metaphrastes, and he also translated the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres. The most comprehensive life of the Virgin then available, written by a distinguished author, it was quickly obtained by Euthymios, who liked the idea of translating it for the Georgian public. He did so in his customary way: he simplified the preface and the highly rhetorical style of Geometres; he omitted some of the author’s more daring thoughts, which did not sound entirely orthodox and which could have been easily misunderstood;²²⁸ he added biblical quotations and other interpolations, such as the legend of Galbios and Candidos; and, generally, he felt free to redact, rephrase, clarify, and rearrange Geometres’ rich text. His skill and intelligence are evident on every page of his translation. Euthymios was an accomplished scholar himself, with access to excellent library resources. But he had to face the problem of authorship: John Geometres was unknown in Georgia and

was certainly not a recognized patristic authority. Euthymios may have transmitted the Georgian text anonymously, following a common metaphrastic practice. In that case, a later scribe (perhaps one of his scribes) who wanted to confer greater authority on this Georgian *Life* and increase its circulation attributed the work to Maximos the Confessor, because of his popularity in Georgia. But given the very early date of the earliest manuscript carrying the ascription to Maximos, it is also possible that the attribution was made by Euthymios himself. He might have felt that his editing had made Geometres’ text consistent with patristic authorship; he might have also thought, reasoning much as Symeon Metaphrastes did regarding St. Panteleemon’s lie to his father, that deception was justified in this case because his goal was to secure the prestige and the widest possible distribution of his work for the spiritual benefit of the Georgian people. As noted above, Euthymios’s translations include some suggestive cases of compilations of texts misattributed to Maximos the Confessor.

In recent years, following the publication of the Georgian *Life* and the arguments presented by Michel van Esbroeck, scholars have assumed that Geometres copied a lost Greek model (whether by Maximos or not), which was also used by Euthymios. As I have argued in this article, there is no reason to suppose that either Geometres or Euthymios reworked a now lost Greek prototype that is otherwise completely unattested. Indeed, if the Virgin’s place at the center of Christ’s life, passion, and resurrection points to a post-iconoclast, tenth-century date for this supposedly lost Greek prototype,²²⁹ then it is unthinkable that John Geometres produced a variant of a contemporary text. It seems clear that such an approach leads to a series of unnecessary contortions based on little more than speculation, fostered by the false attribution of a lost urtext to Maximos the Confessor. As I have demonstrated, taking Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin* as the source of Euthymios’s translation is the only reasonable way to explain the relationship between these two texts, even if we may not always be in a position to understand the reasons for Euthymios’s choices. The

227 Quoted in E. Chelidze, “The Two Georgian Translations of the Homilies of St. Gregory Nazianzen,” *StP* 33 (1997): 506–8, at 507–8.

228 For metaphrasis as an opportunity for the theological correction and emendation of hagiographical texts, see S. F. Johnson, *The “Life and Miracles of Thekla”: A Literary Study* (Washington, DC, 2006), 104–12, and S. A. Paschalidis, “Παρατηρήσεις στις μεταφράσεις των βυζαντινών αγιολογικών κειμένων,” *Βυζαντινά* 33 (2013–14): 373–86, at 377–80.

229 See Cunningham, “The Life of the Virgin Mary” (n. 4 above), 148–50, for a summary and assessment of Shoemaker’s and Booth’s views.

Georgian *Life* can only be understood as a Euthymian version of Geometres' *Life of the Virgin*, which in turn is a synthesis of earlier sources, producing a comprehensive account of the Virgin's life by one of the most gifted Byzantine writers and one of the most earnest devotees of the Virgin.

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